

through monitors. More importantly, the student is able to ask the teacher questions and have them answered immediately. The project has been in the works for two years and the faculty is very pleased with the progress. Public relations person for the tribes, Richard Subia, said much of the success of this project for SWOSU has come from the working relationship with university president and Great Plains RC&D Council member, Dr. John Hays. Dr. Hays made personal visits to many of the tribal centers to invite them to be a part of the project. Because of the working relationship with the university and Indian tribes, the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe has agreed to sponsor one third of the salary of an Indian counselor on the university campus. This project is the first of its type in Oklahoma to serve the Indian community. The Great Plains RC&D Council continues to add to the distance learning project in cooperation with SWOSU.

Farm Bill training on final EQIP rules was offered through distance learning and interactive television to NRCS teams at twelve different locations on June 3, 2003, saving time and money. A Global Position System - Geographic Information System workshop was also offered at no charge and was attended by RC&D council members from High Plains, Great Plains and ASCOG, and Oklahoma Conservation Commission Water Quality staff on June 20, 2003.



GPS Workshop

The RC&D is facilitating the creation of a *NoTill Alliance* for promoting sustainable cropping systems that will benefit economic development and provide value added agriculture. Local producers, conservation districts and other interested groups are encouraged to participate. A popular and profitable method of marketing involves the certifying of food products produced on land that maintains soil health and improves water quality. A board or alliance will be created to provide the certification necessary to create market access and development. Promotion of no-till conservation practices and other best management practices that will sustain soil health and improve water quality, will be a primary objective. Another objective will be to utilize the alliance to certify sustainable cropping systems to promote economic development by attracting large agriculture industry and adding value to agriculture production through marketing and research.



Great Plains RC&D hosted a "Women in Agriculture and Small Business Workshop" that had 150 attendees from all over Oklahoma. Speakers and exhibitors provided information throughout the full-day conference. The RC&D created and provided a CD-ROM with the conference information and handouts, along with other resources and internet site connections, to help continue the successful operations of women-owned farms and businesses.

Fun Country RC&D

South Central Oklahoma is often referred to as the "Lakes and Trails" area by the Oklahoma Department of Tourism. Fun Country RC&D is actively involved in working with the City of Davis in the expansion and development of newly acquired properties attached to the Turner Falls recreational area. While ecotourism is the main focus, reclamation and education of the natural

resource concerns is their primary target of conservation and development. Eastern Red Cedar is still a number one resource concern in the RC&D area. Most recently, tribal partnerships are being utilized to concentrate on common issues of our geographic resource areas, and human and social needs. These efforts are the focal point in the development of marketable by-products in conjunction with Eastern Red Cedar control. These partnerships will produce both economic and resource benefits to the local communities.

Along with the increase in Eastern Red Cedar, urban expansion into rural areas has continued to

Women In Agriculture Workshop



increase the needs for fire protection. These infested areas have put greater demands on rural and volunteer fire departments. The Fun Country RC&D, in cooperation with the Southern Oklahoma Development Association, continues to promote the installation of dry fire hydrants. To date, well over 135 wet and dry hydrants have been installed in this area.

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Cross Timbers RC&D

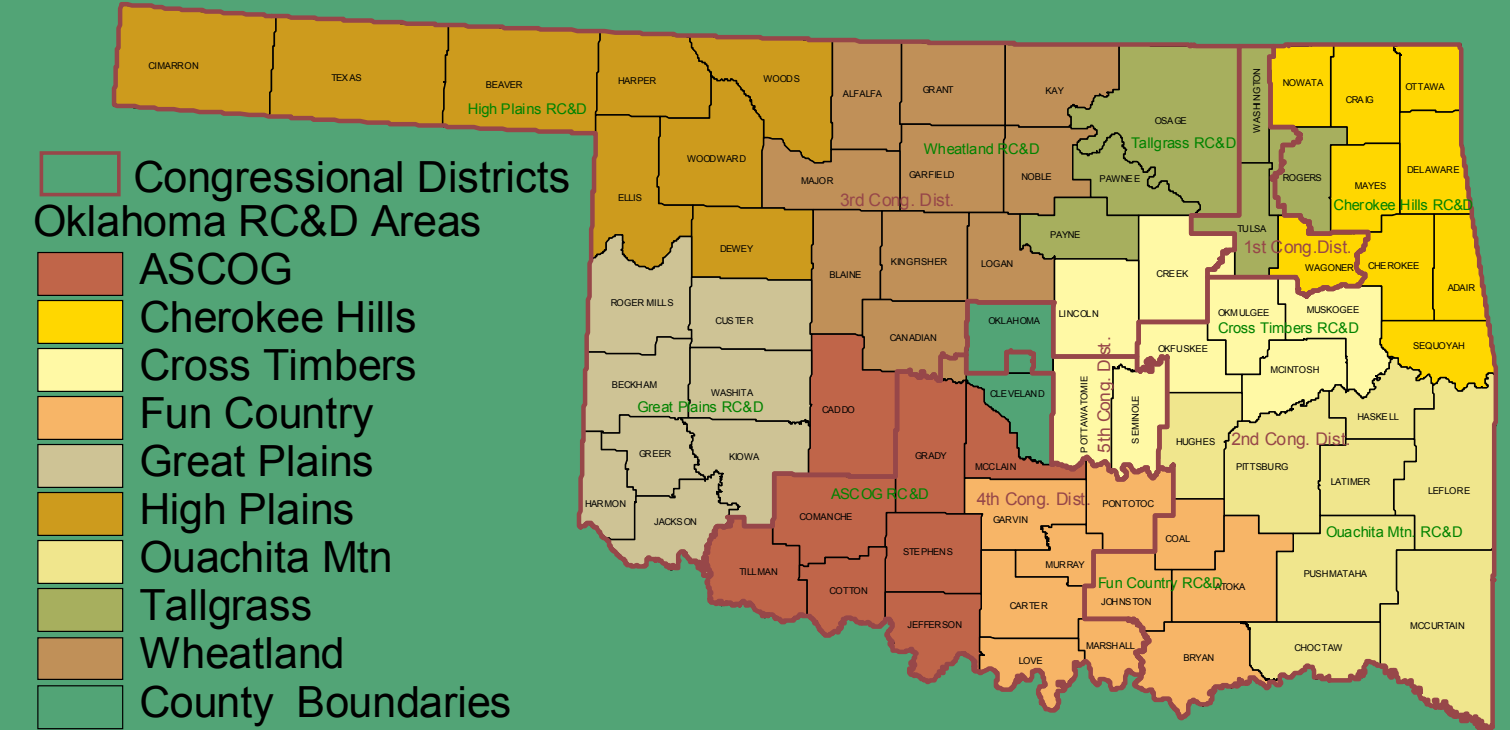
Cross Timbers RC&D is working with the Muscogee Creek Nation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to construct the "Creek Nation Interpretative Center" in Okmulgee. The trail system and the wetland area have been completed.

The RC&D is coordinating a project with the National Tree Trust - Community Trees Project and the prison in Holdenville to containerize and maintain 14,000 tree seedlings that will be permanently planted on public use areas. Inmates have volunteered over 20,000 hours last year on this project.



Dry Fire Hydrants

OKLAHOMA RC&D 2003 Annual Report





The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program helps people in rural areas plan and carry out activities that increase the conservation of natural resources, stimulate and support economic development, and enhance the environment and standard of living in local communities.

Local people make the choices for their community – whether they work on land conservation, water management, environmental enhancement, community development, or something unique to their particular area; in every case, local people are the decision-makers.

Oklahoma RC&D Areas

Oklahoma has nine authorized RC&D areas, serving 75 of the 77 counties. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the program, providing a coordinator and administrative support to each of the areas. Each RC&D area association is a not-for-profit organization governed by local citizen volunteers.

RC&D Councils obtain assistance from various sources and are able to leverage funds to maximize the benefits at the local level as shown in the following table.

FUND SOURCE CATEGORY	AMOUNT RECEIVED
Federal	\$4,344,867.00
Non-profit	\$2,231,248.00
Commercial	\$92,711,427.50
State	\$435,905.00
Private	\$1,517,100.00
Unknown	\$31,000.00
Tribal	\$8,950.00
OKLAHOMA TOTAL	\$101,280,497.50

Tallgrass RC&D

The Tallgrass RC&D Council received a grant for \$99,000 to provide gap financing in Osage and Pawnee counties. The grant was received from USDA Rural Development, to assist with financing new and start up businesses for the purpose of increasing employment. This year, the council loaned \$80,000 of the \$99,000 grant, which created 23 jobs in Pawhuska and Skiatook. These grant moneys were combined with more than \$150,000 that was provided by participating banks, to assist with business establishment.

The Council is very active in rural tourism, and has a separate committee made up of 15 members from throughout the RC&D area. The committee recently published its third tourism brochure promoting tourism attractions in the six-county Tallgrass RC&D area. The tourism committee has an annual *Tourism Conference*, and this past year held it at Rogers State University in Claremore. The conference features speakers from all over the country.

The Council received a grant for \$10,000 to install lights at a youth baseball park last summer in Glencoe. This project allows for more youth participation in baseball with the addition of night games.

The Tallgrass RC&D helped facilitate an outreach meeting in Claremore, which targeted the underserved population in both Rogers and Tulsa Counties. The meeting had over 450 people in attendance.

Wheatland RC&D

The Wheatland RC&D conducted an *Abandoned Water Well Sealing Demonstration Project* in 2003. The Council coordinated and assisted with the plugging of 25 abandoned water wells in the ten-county region. The hand dug and drilled wells were plugged according to standards set by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB). This project demonstrated the proper



Well Sealing Project

procedures to seal wells to protect the integrity of the underground water supply. Partners included NRCS, conservation districts, OWRB, Wheatland RC&D, landowners, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, Envirotech Engineering and others.

Wheatland and High Plains RC&D coordinated a *Project Developmental Task Force* with the KAW Nation. This was a symposium to discuss projects and funding sources. Partners included USDA Rural Development, NRCS, Oklahoma State University, RC&D, Oklahoma Small Business Development Center, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Wheatland RC&D sponsored three grant writing courses, with a total of 118 participants. The Council believes it is better to teach a person to fish and have them content for a life time, rather than feed a person a fish and have contentment for only a day.

ASCOG RC&D

The ASCOG RC&D Council members have met with local leaders from Eakly, Cement, Alex, Apache, Ryan and Frederick, to assist in the development of by-laws, articles of incorporation, and 501-c-3 non-profit status documentation that will allow these communities to help themselves grow economically. These communities will apply to various USDA agencies for business startup and expansion grants, housing development loans, community centers, rural fire protection, park development and many other projects that will enhance local residents' quality of life.

According to Dennis Klugh, Fort Cobb Economic Development Authority member, "the ASCOG RC&D has given us the ability to fish, rather than us asking to be fed a fish."

Ouachita Mountains RC&D

For 28 years, the Ouachita Mountains RC&D has sponsored, promoted, and conducted the annual *Southeast District Forestry Judging Contest* for FFA and 4-H Clubs. This year's contest was held on April 8th at Beavers Bend State Park, with 130 youths participating.

In conjunction with the contest, the RC&D also provides the needed training for the contest as well as six college scholarships totaling \$3,200, awarded annually to the high individual contest scorers. Since the scholarship program began in 1975, over \$52,000 has been awarded to college-bound contest winners.

Technical assistance for the contest and training is provided by Oklahoma Forestry Services personnel, Choctaw Nation Forestry, NRCS, and area conservation district personnel. Financial assistance for the program is provided by the Oklahoma Rural Rehabilitation Corporation, area conservation districts, the Oklahoma Forestry Association, Weyerhaeuser Foundation, and other local contributors.

Ouachita Mountains RC&D plans, develops, sponsors, and conducts an annual *Forest Utilization Conference and Equipment*



Forest Utilization Conference and Expo

Exposition to assist with adding value to Oklahoma's wood products and services. In April 2003, approximately 190 people attended the 8th Annual "Forestry on the Grow" conference and expo at Western Hills Guest Ranch near Wagoner. Exploring opportunities and new technologies for woodland management and the wood products industry is the basic premise for the 3-day conference.

A variety of subjects and issues important to the industry are addressed by renowned professors and presenters from Virginia Tech, University of Minnesota, University of Georgia, University of Arkansas, University of Louisville, Mississippi State University, Louisiana Tech, Oklahoma State University, and more. The expo includes demonstrations of the latest

equipment technology available as well as vendors from well-known dealers and distributors of forestry products and services. Technical assistance is provided by



Forestry Judging Contest

the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma State University - Forestry Department, NRCS, the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology, and interested state associations. In order to keep costs affordable for participants, needed financial assistance is provided each year by a variety of private, state, and federal sources.

Cherokee Hills RC&D

Cherokee Hills RC&D operates a *Revolving Loan Fund* for small business development and business facility construction. The Council has made 32 loans totaling just over \$1.25 million. Over 75 percent of the small business loans have been made to Indian-owned businesses. Several new jobs have been created through the Council's program. Two projects funded this year were:

Tony's Diagnostics

The RC&D, in partnership with BancFirst, approved a \$225,000 loan to construct a new state-of-the-art auto repair shop. With the advent of all the electronic technology on today's vehicles, the shade tree mechanic is out of luck. Expensive equipment is required to diagnose and repair the new high tech vehicles. Tony had been leasing his facility for the past ten years and was told last spring that it was going to be sold. Rather than purchasing an outdated facility, Tony approached the RC&D for help. The new facility will be open for business next spring, and will employ three additional mechanics.

Action Graphics

Cherokee Hills RC&D, in a 50/50 (percent) partnership with BancFirst, made Clark Cox a \$48,000 loan to open Action Graphics Printing in Tahlequah. Clark had been operating a small print shop in his garage, after work hours and on weekends. Clark was the executive director of the Small Business Development Center in Miami, and later in

Tahlequah. After helping many in the area to start their own businesses, he decided to take his own

advice. The shop opened in January and is doing great. Two employees have been hired.



Cherokee Hills RC&D has negotiated a new one year business incubator contract lease with Community Medical Equipment. This is a new Indian-owned business creating four new jobs in the Tahlequah area. The business provides medical equipment and supplies to homebound and hospice clients. The Council grants new and emerging businesses rental rates of approximately one-half the going rate to reduce their overhead cost; thereby, improving their success rate in the first three years of operation.

High Plains RC&D

The High Plains RC&D facilitated the location of a new major industry to Cimarron County, Oklahoma. The RC&D put together an industrial development team that worked with Nathaniel Energy Corporation to successfully locate in Oklahoma's western most county. Nathaniel Energy will generate electricity by using biomass, trash and used tires. The company will also manufacture carbon black and construct a two-acre greenhouse, using excess carbon dioxide to stimulate plant growth. The company will invest \$50 million in building the facility, which will employ 200 people. Cimarron County has a population of 3,148, and in



Community Involvement

1998, was declared under general and economic distress, due to outmigration, by the US Secretary of Agriculture. Other



Action Graphics

partners included USDA Rural Development, NRCS, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Cimarron County Conservation District, and OSU Cooperative Extension Service.

When a petition was filed to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC) as an endangered species, the High Plains RC&D

Council led an effort to prevent the species from being listed as endangered. The Council joined the High Plains Partnership; a five state Western Governors' Association sponsored organization. The Council took the lead and developed a concept called the "Ranch Conversation" as a way to bring diverse stakeholders together to work toward common solutions. The concept caught on and has been used extensively. Habitat loss was identified as one of the main reasons for the decline of the LPC. The effort was hampered by the fact that federal monies only become available to help after a species has been declared endangered. Members of the Council made numerous trips to Washington D.C. to seek funds for habitat improvement. The result has been that in four years, 60,000 private land acres and 22,000 public land acres are in voluntary habitat improvement programs in the High Plains RC&D area, with over \$700,000 in monies raised that have been directed toward research and cost share assistance. The result has been that the LPC has not been listed as endangered and remains a "species at risk." The project has received national and international attention. The project has become a true model of what locally-led efforts can accomplish.

The High Plains RC&D and the Great Plains RC&D have led the effort to create a regional wildlife viewing trail in western Oklahoma to promote tourism with the potential to add several hundred million dollars to Oklahoma's economy. The partnership now includes 26 state and federal agencies as well as local organizations to develop the trail concept. A support organization called the Oklahoma Wildlife and Prairie Heritage Alliance was created and has hired a full-time coordinator. This project received legislative support last year in House Concurrent Resolution No. 1039.

Great Plains RC&D

The Great Plains RC&D cosponsored a conference with Southwestern Oklahoma State University's (SWOSU) Center for Distance Learning and Continuing Education and the American Indian Institute for Progress, to offer more learning opportunities for Indians in Oklahoma. Through interactive studios, courses from the SWOSU campus can now

be viewed from tribal centers. Teachers are able to tell if a student understands the last point made by seeing their faces