

# Long Range Plan (FY2015 to FY2019)

## Resource Conservation Program for Oklahoma County Conservation District

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### Organization of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

A political subdivision of the State of Oklahoma – authorities, powers and structure contained in O.S. 27A.

- Organized in 1941, the primary purpose of our District is to ensure that all citizens have access to quality education and assistance as they seek to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural resources of our county. The Oklahoma County Conservation District is located in central Oklahoma and covers 459,802 acres. Our District is unique in that 79% of the total land inside our boundaries is within an incorporated city. The State Capitol is also located in Oklahoma County. Our District encompasses a broad scope of both rural and urban land users and requires an intense education and information program.

### Vision of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

- Clean water and healthy soils promoting a quality environment

### Mission of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

- To educate, empower, and assist all citizens of Oklahoma County in protecting, managing, and conserving our natural resources by:
  - (1) Providing technical assistance to rural and urban landowners that helps reduce soil erosion and improve water quality
  - (2) Promoting quality education programs that encourage the respect for and careful management of all our natural resources
  - (3) Building strong alliances with other resource agencies

### Values of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

- Locally led conservation efforts
- Professional integrity
- Promote Best Management Practices
- Proactive management of natural resources
- Non-regulatory conservation efforts
- Valued history of leading local conservation efforts
- Partnerships with other groups, organizations, and agencies

## **Natural Resource Data/Inventory**

- Oklahoma County is in the Red Bed Plains of central Oklahoma. The elevation ranges from 881 feet above sea level in the northeast part of the county to 1,410 feet above sea level in the southwest part of the county. The geographic center of Oklahoma is near Jones.
- The eastern part of the county is in the Cross Timbers soil resource area and the western part is in the Central Rolling Red Prairie soil resource area.
- The major cities are Oklahoma City, Edmond, and Midwest City. The population of Oklahoma County is 755,245 which is approx. 19.6% of the state's population.
- Two major rivers cross Oklahoma County. They are the Deep Fork River that heads near Bethany, flows through Lake Arcadia and exits the county near Luther. The North Canadian River enters Oklahoma County in the west central part of the county, flows through Lake Overholser, central Oklahoma City and Jones and exits the county near Harrah. Excellent soils are along these rivers and are suitable for growing mostly alfalfa and wheat. Sod production is a major enterprise on the North Canadian River soils.
- Deer Creek flows through the northwest part of the county. This creek has major flooding problems. The other major creeks are Crutch, Coffee, Soldier, Bluff, Spring, Coon, Wildhorse, and Smith.
- Livestock, horses, and hay production are the primary agricultural commodities on the uplands.

## **Trends Impacting Conservation in the Oklahoma County Conservation District**

- Rapid population growth
- Increasing conversion of farmland to urban land
- Greater demand on all natural resources and wildlife
- Funding resources not keeping up with demands
- Land being held for development
- Increased sediment from developing land
- Encroachment of eastern red cedar population
- Fewer active farmers
- NRCS becoming increasingly focused on farm-bill delivery
- Increase in land users with small acreages
- Unique operations such as wineries, farms for family fun and education, and small acreages for organic farming

## **Strategies to Address Trends**

- More education and information outreach
- Identify the information methods and media to communicate with small acreage land owners
- Develop a strategy for financing programs with funds outside of normal sources
- Sponsor projects/programs with partner groups
- Take advantage of available training opportunities for district staff
- Strengthen partnership with NRCS and FSA to assist in effective, efficient delivery of farm bill programs
- Coordinate with cities and towns to address natural resource issues such as storm water runoff and sediment control
- Raise awareness of natural resource concerns with state legislature and elected officials
- Develop working relationship with local leaders in an effort to implement Emergency Action Plans on flood control sites when needed
- Continue to strengthen State Cost-Share program delivery

## **Critical Geographic Areas:**

- Urban and Rural Fringe
- Deer Creek
- Coffee Creek
- North Canadian River
- Deep Fork River
- Lake Arcadia

## **Top 5 Natural Resource Concerns**

1. Increased erosion and sediment damage in urban and suburban development
2. Encroachment of eastern red cedar and other invasive species on range, pasture, and suburban fringe areas
3. Water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams
4. Erosion on cropland
5. Loss of wildlife habitat

## **Natural Resource Priorities and Goals:**

- Cropland Erosion:
  1. By 2019, reduce erosion on 90% of cropland to the allowable T for existing soils.
  2. Encourage landowners to utilize state and federal programs to meet cropland erosion goals
  3. By 2019, increase cropland acres under conservation plan by 30%
- Water Quality:
  1. Cooperate with Blue Thumb in stream monitoring on Bluff, Chisholm, Coffee, Deep Fork, and Soldier Creeks to ensure water quality does not exceed TMDL standards
  2. Promote Best Management Practices (BMP's) that improve water quality
- Flood Control:
  1. By March each year, thorough inspection reports will be completed on Bear Fall Coon Creek Site 32 and Kickapoo Nation Site 4
  2. By 2016, work with Oklahoma County Commissioners to reduce flooding problems on Deer Creek
- Grazing Land:
  1. By 2017, OCCD will have worked cooperatively with local landowners to reduce evasive species of eastern red cedar by 20%
  2. By 2019, increase grazing lands under approved conservation plan by 40%
- Urban Resource Management:
  1. Provide technical assistance to counties and cities to implement BMP's
  2. Provide technical assistance on control of eastern red cedar
- Soil Health:
  1. Conduct soil health training workshops for rural and urban landusers
  2. Encourage cooperators/landusers to use plant diversity in soil management
  3. Encourage landowners to practice no-till or minimum tillage
  4. Encourage small acreage landowners to keep soil covered throughout the year for soil protection and health

## **Information – Education Priorities and Goals**

- Increase number of elementary students participating in Natural Resource Days to inform young people about need for conserving our natural resources
- Increase number 'in the classroom environmental education presentations' to educate youth
- Create educational opportunities and demonstration projects for small acre and limited resource land owners
- Publish a newsletter three times annually for producers, educators, landowners, and legislators
- Assist OACD and local sponsors with National Land and Range Judging Contest
- Increase awareness of the Conservation District as the lead agency for natural resource management
- Continue partnering with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in the development and use of the Lake Arcadia Education Area
- Continue to promote educational opportunities such as annual poster contest, annual ScienceFest, and the use of natural resource curriculum such as Dust Bowl and Project WET
- Promote increased awareness of district programs and conservation activities through use of news stories, newsletter, district website, and social media outlets
- Promote Farm Bill Programs through district newsletter, articles, and website
- Utilize volunteers and partner agencies to help deliver district educational programs
- Invite legislators to special events and programs
- Participate in legislative days and Conservation Day at the Capitol
- Provide information to legislators via outreach, newsletter, and district minutes

## **Proposed Long Range Budget Needs**

- In order to maintain existing programs and implement new programs the district will need to see an increase in program funding of 20% per year.
- The conservation district needs a minimum of \$10,000 in operating expenses to meet current and future demands.

A complete fiscal year budget request is attached.

## **Staffing Needs**

- The conservation district must be able to maintain current staff and provide for an annual 5% cost-of-living increase.
- To implement new programs in our district, we need to hire an additional staff member by 2016. An additional full-time staff person is needed to provide youth and adult education and outreach programs to citizens of Oklahoma County.

## **Priority Actions – 18 months**

Attached is the current Joint Plan of Operations for the Oklahoma County Conservation District and the Oklahoma City NRCS Field Office.

## **References:**

Oklahoma County Soil Survey  
US Census  
Blue Thumb Data Interpretation  
Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, Ag  
Handbook 296  
Topographic Maps of Oklahoma County, USGS