

5-Year Plan (2020 to 2024)

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 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.
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Function of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

To make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with respect to conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

We Serve & Why

- Citizens of Oklahoma County** – The needs of our constituents are of utmost priority. We have a responsibility to educate and assist citizens/land owners in protecting and enhancing the natural resource base in the county and beyond as well as a purpose, authorization and passion to serve.
 - Future Generations** – Oklahoma County will be home to people for many years to come. It is our goal to conserve, protect, and enhance natural resources today so they are available to future generations.
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Mission of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

- To educate, empower, and assist the citizens of Oklahoma County in protecting, managing, and conserving our renewable natural resources.
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Vision of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

- To have clean water and healthy soils for a sustainable quality environment.
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Values of the Oklahoma County Conservation District

- Locally led conservation efforts
 - Professional integrity, honesty, compassion, and fairness
 - Enhance natural resources for future generations
 - Promote best management practices
 - Proactive management of natural resources
 - Non-regulatory conservation efforts
 - Partnerships with other groups, organizations, and agencies
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Natural Resource Data & Information:

- 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 774,203 which is 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 Crutcho, Coffee, Soldier, Bluff, Spring, Coon, Wildhorse, and Smith.
- Livestock, horses, and hay production are the primary agricultural commodities on the uplands.

Criteria for Selecting Conservation Priorities:

- The cost and availability of personnel to address the need
- Locally desired and needed
- Available funding sources to address the issue (local, state, federal, and/or private)
- Most cost effective
- Time required to accomplish
- Number of district residents affected
- Acres treated and area of the district positively impacted
- Resource sustainability

Trends Impacting Conservation in the Oklahoma County Conservation District:

- Rapid population growth
- Increasing conversion of farmland to urban land
- Greater demand on all our 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 small acre land users including underserved communities
- Increase in unique operations such as wineries, specialty crop producers, Agri-tourism, and urban farming
- Emergence of local farmer's markets

Priority Natural Resource Conservation Needs & Geographic Areas, Measures of Success and Goals:

Priority Natural Resource Conservation Need	Geographic Area	Measures of Success	Goals
Soil Health and protection	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans in conservation systems • Producer assisted outside of conservation systems • Soil health measurements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, 100 conservation plans developed and implemented • By February 2024, have assisted 125 producers with soil health measurements and practices

Soil Erosion	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil erosion reduced • Plans in conservation systems • Producer assisted outside of conservation systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, 100 conservation plans developed and implemented • By February 2024, have assisted 125 producers with soil health measurements and practices
Water quality (livestock, nutrients, pesticides, and other pollution sources)	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality measurements as related to the standards • Number of projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, have educated 2,500 people on water quality • By February 2024, have completed 25 water quality improvement projects • Blue Thumb monitoring of 10 streams
Water quantity (to include water supply, water storage, and stormwater infiltration)	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, have completed 10 water storage, 10 water supply • By 2024, have 10 sites where we measure water infiltration rates
Invasive species	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acres in conservation systems • Acres outside of conservation systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 500 acres treated for invasive species suppression
Grazing lands	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number related plans, acres and impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, have 5,000 acres of conservation treated areas
Wildlife habitat including pollinator/monarch habitat	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects, related plans, acres and impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, have 25 projects completed for wildlife habitat and/or pollinator enhancements
Urban Agriculture	City wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people reached and related impact from projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2024, have partnered with 50 organizations and/or producers involved in urban agriculture
Continuing conservation education and outreach	County wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people reached and related impact from events and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By February 2024, have increased the number of adults by 500 reached with events and activities including social media • Maintain the number of natural resource education events at four
Flood Control	Bear Fall Coon and Kickapoo Nations Watersheds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number acres impacted through flood control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual inspections for the two structures in Oklahoma County

Milestones, Timeline & Actions

Priority: Soil health & protection

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, 100 conservation plans developed and implemented
- By February 2024, have assisted 125 producers with soil health measurements and practices

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Develop plan for annual stakeholders planning session	By Dec 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a stakeholder planning session
Develop plan for tours, workshops, demonstrations, and educational events	By 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host one tour annually • Host four events/demonstrations annually
Participate in Oklahoma State Cost Share and NRCS Programs	Each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 10 Cost Share projects per year
Develop soil health monitoring program on 10 sites	By April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine location of monitoring sites • Train volunteers to assist in monitoring sites

Priority: Reduce soil erosion

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, 100 conservation plans developed and implemented
- By February 2024, have assisted 125 producers with soil health measurements and practices

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Collaborate with partner organizations and groups to reduce urban soil erosion	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify specific partners and possible projects to implement.

Priority: Water quality (livestock, nutrients, pesticides, and other pollution sources)

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, have educated 2,500 people on water quality
- By February 2024, have completed 25 water quality improvement projects
- Blue Thumb monitoring of 10 streams

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Develop water quality education programs	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resource day events for 450 students annually • Reach 500 adults annually through workshops, events and other educational programs • Identify funding sources
Identify water quality projects, partners, and funding	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop timeline and implement projects
Work with Blue Thumb Program in 9-10 streams in Oklahoma County	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify additional monitoring sites and volunteers
Identify funding source to host volunteer appreciation event	By Feb 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host one event

Priority: Water quantity (to include water supply, water storage, and stormwater infiltration)

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, have completed 10 water storage, 10 water supply
- By 2024, have 10 sites where we measure water infiltration rates

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Participate in State and NRCS cost share programs	Each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist producer in implementing planned practices
Collaborate with city officials and other partners to reduce urban runoff and increase infiltration	By Feb 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify projects, partners, and funding

Priority: Invasive species

Measurable Goal:

- Have 500 acres treated for invasive species suppression.

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Participate in State and NRCS cost share programs	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 5 cost share agreements/contracts
Improve 100 acres through invasive species control	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance on invasive species control

Priority: Grazing lands

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, have 5,000 acres of conservation treated areas

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Participate in State and NRCS cost share programs	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 5 cost share agreements/contracts
Convert marginal cropland through forage or biomass planting	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance and track progress
Improve existing pastureland	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance and track progress

Priority: Wildlife habitat including pollinator/monarch habitat

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, have 25 projects completed for wildlife habitat and/or pollinator enhancements

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Collaborate with local partners to establish or improve native wildlife and pollinator habitat (including monarch habitat)	By 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources for new sites • Provide technical assistance for backyard and other small plots
Develop comprehensive signage for new habitat	By 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources for signage • Increase public awareness through educational events and social media

Priority: Urban agriculture

Measurable Goal:

- Number of people reached and related impact from projects

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Identify urban agriculture projects, partners and producers	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop partnerships and implement 10 annually

Priority: Continuing conservation education and outreach

Measurable Goal:

- By February 2024, have increased the number of adults reached by 50 with events and activities including social media
- Maintain number of natural resource education events at four

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Educational opportunities identified, and plan based on audience, messaging, and media needed	By Feb 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase electronic and social media • Establish reoccurring electronic newsletter
Identify new ways to share district accomplishments to key audiences	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new ways to share district accomplishments to key audiences • Participate in employee training opportunities and/or professional development
Establish volunteer program	By 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine structure for volunteers • Research liability for volunteers • Recruit volunteers
Identify underserved individuals and groups	By June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve participation in USDA Programs • Pursue grant opportunities
Assist the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts in hosting the National Land and Range Judging Contest	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule Land and Range Judging Steering Committee meeting • Receive contest pre-registration • Update website information • Coordinate the contest
Schedule four natural resource day events utilizing earth team and Blue Thumb volunteers	Yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct four events annually at the Lake Arcadia education area

Priority: Flood Control

Measurable Goal:

- Conduct annual inspections for the two structures in Oklahoma County

Milestones	Timeline	Actions
Schedule annual inspections for Bear Fall Coon and Kickapoo Nations flood control sites in Oklahoma County	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual watershed inspection and address any maintenance issues • Inform landowners on property easements and landowner responsibilities

Land Manager Needs

- Conservation planning assistance and access to planning tools
- Education and information of conservation systems that get results and programs available
- Technical assistance
- Have their voice heard at local, state, and federal level
- Program support
- Adequate cost share or grants for operators and land owners
- Mentor farmer program and ways to exchange ideas
- Assistance with natural disasters and recovery
- Information, research, and resource sharing

Additional Long-Range Plan Items:

Item 1. *Identify one major project (See attachment).*

Attached project will help meet priority needs in soil health protection, water quality, water quantity, wildlife habitat including pollinator/monarch habitat, urban conservation, and conservation and continuing education.

Item 2. *Assess how district staff and directors spend time.*

Time assessed as percentage of each of the District's priority natural resource conservation needs.

- Soil health and protection – 18%
- Soil erosion – 5%
- Water quality (livestock, nutrients, pesticides, and other pollution sources) – 10%
- Water quantity (to include water supply, water storage, and storm water infiltration) – 2%
- Invasive species – 7%
- Grazing lands – 3%
- Wildlife habitat including pollinator/monarch habitat – 15%
- Urban agriculture – 15%
- Conservation and continuing education – 23%
- Flood Control – 2%

Item 3. *Develop List of Top Ten Ways Oklahoma County Conservation District Can Help You* (See attachment)

Item 4. *Develop a recruitment/succession plan for conservation district directors*

Recruitment of Directors

- Recruit potential directors all the time
- Use associate director position as a starter position so current directors get to know the potential directors
- Consider recruitment of recipients of district and USDA programs and/or technical assistance
- Consider recruitment of individuals within partner organizations as potential candidates

Set Expectations of a Board Member

- Take advantage of training opportunities to develop abilities
- Attend regular board meetings and special meetings
- Participate in district programs and activities
- Be involved and responsible for district program direction
- Develop policies and programs
- Promote soil and water conservation in the community

- Help manage district staff
- Represent district in public
- Help secure financial resources
- Promote conservation district

Promote Benefits of Being a Board Member

- Representing local resource concerns
- Being a voice for the citizens of your city and county
- Satisfaction of providing your time to improve the environment
- Being actively involved with assistance and educational programs for citizens
- Providing leadership in community resource conservation efforts
- Development of leadership skills

Maps attached include:

- Watershed boundaries
- Municipal boundaries
- Degraded waterways

References:

Oklahoma County Soil Survey

US Census

Blue Thumb Data

Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, Agricultural Handbook 296

Topographic Maps of Oklahoma County, USGS