USDA – NRCS Conservation Programs in Oklahoma

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Our Mission

To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Our Vision

Harmony between people and the land.
Topics

• Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
  • Who we are
  • What we do

• Conservation Program Opportunities to Address Water Issues

• Rehabilitation of Aging Dams
Federal agency under USDA

Formerly Soil Conservation Service (SCS)

Offices located in each of 77 counties; supported by 6 technical offices

Technical staff: soil conservationists, range conservationists, technicians, engineers, geologists, soil scientists, biologists, agronomists
The Dust Bowl Led to the Birth of NRCS
NRCS – What We Do . . .

- Conservation on private land
- Provide voluntary assistance (technical & financial)
- Work in partnership with 88 local conservation districts
Navigate to AOI by Address
Zoom to Address
Navigate to AOI by County
Programs to get Conservation on the Land

- FB Stewardship Programs (CSP)
- FB Easement Prog. (WRP, GRP, FRPP)
- FB Environ Improve. (EQIP, WHIP, GSWC)
- Plant Materials
- Conservation Operations
- Watersheds with Rehab of Aging Dams
- EWP
- Soil Survey
- RC&D
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Everything Done in Conservation Impacts WATER
Conservation Programs

Conservation programs are a tool for implementation of a producer’s conservation plan:

- Long-term contracts (cost-share and easements)
- Provide cost-share and incentive payments for implementation of approved conservation practices consistent with specific program objectives
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Farm Bill Conservation Programs

- CRP – Conservation Reserve Program (FSA)
- FRPP – Farm & Ranchland Protection Program
- WHIP – Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- GRP – Grassland Reserve Program
- CSP – Conservation Security Program
- GSWC – Ground & Surface Water Cons. Program
- WRP – Wetland Reserve Program
- EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program
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Conservation Program Funding
FY 2005 - Oklahoma

EQIP - $22.8 mil.
WRP - $3.6 mil.
GSWC - $0.8 mil.
CSP - $1.5 mil.
WHIP - $1.0 mil.
GRP - $2.7 mil.
FRPP - $0.8 mil.
CRP - $36.0 mil (FSA)

EWP - $9.0 mil.
Watersheds - $1.9 mil.
Rehabilitation - $3.4 mil.

Financial assistance to producers
FY 2005 = $82.6 million
Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP

- Provides financial assistance (up to 75% C/S) for structural, vegetative, and management practices
- Funding pools:
  - Conservation District level ($16.7 mil)
  - 29 Local Emphasis Areas ($4.9 mil)
  - Statewide Resource Concerns ($1.2 mil)
- Continuous sign-up
- Evaluation of applications in Nov. & Dec.
Conservation District Level

- Locally led; prioritized resource concerns at local level
  - Soil erosion on cropland and grazing lands
  - Irrigation water conservation
  - Water quality concerns
  - Animal waste management; nutrient management
  - Eastern red cedar invasion
Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP

Local Emphasis Areas

- Priority resource concerns identified in 29 local areas
- Resource concerns addressed:
  - Irrigation water management
  - Model farm & ranch
  - Invasive species
  - Conservation tillage / buffers
  - Critical eroding areas
  - Animal waste mgt. (poultry)
- Tribal / under served
Statewide Resource Concerns

- Identified by the State Technical Committee
  - Irrigation Water Conservation (scheduling & conversion to low pressure/higher efficiency)
  - Manure Transfer (distribution of waste)
  - Lagoon Closures
  - AFO /CAFO (existing & expanding beef, dairy, or swine)
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Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP

Ground Water & Surface Water Conservation

- Targeted to the Ogallala aquifer in 3 panhandle counties

- Improve efficiencies of existing irrigation systems through conversion to low pressure systems and improved scheduling

- Can not bring new land under irrigation
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Wetland Reserve Program – WRP
Easement Options:
- 30 year - 75% restoration cost-share
  75% ag value ($1,000/ac max)
- Permanent – 100% restoration cost
  100% ag value ($1,000/ac max)

Restoration Agreements
- 10 year - 75% restoration cost-share
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Wetland Reserve Program

- Landowners control access, non-developed recreational activities, such as hunting and fishing, and the right to lease recreational uses
- FY 2006 enrollment authorizes 150,000 acres (OK – approx. 3,500 ac. / yr.)
- Goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values along with optimum wildlife habitat on every acre enrolled
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Total No. of Contracts = 223
Acres under Contract = 53,395
$$ Spent To Date = $33,673,929
47 counties

OK is 9\textsuperscript{th} in nation in WRP acres
Red Slough WRP, McCurtain Co.

Of the 7500 acres under easement, roughly 4000 acres are shallow water.
NRCS has assisted communities build more than 11,000 dams in 2000 Watershed Projects in 47 States since 1948.
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Nation’s 1st Upstream Flood Control Dam
Cloud Creek Watershed Dam No. 1

Completed July 8, 1948 in Washita County, Oklahoma
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Natural Resources Conservation Service

Sandstone Creek Watershed

“The World’s First Completed Upstream Flood Control Project”
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Sergeant Major Creek Watershed

First Pilot Rehabilitation Project in the Nation - 2000
First Decommissioning of a Watershed Dam

Cavalry Creek Watershed
Dam No. 6
Washita County
Watershed Flood Control Dams

“Federally-Assisted”

not

“Federally Owned”

Watershed Sponsor (entity of state government)
Is “Owner of Record”
$71 million ANNUAL Benefits
  - Flood damage reduction
  - Roads & bridges
  - Rural communities

Project Sponsors are responsible for Operation and Maintenance
(2006 needs = $3.2 million)
Are New Watershed Flood Control Dams Still Being Constructed in Oklahoma?

None in 2003 or 2004

But…

Four new dams will be completed this year!

Lower Clear Boggy Creek – Atoka County
Upper Red Rock Creek – Noble County
Stillwater Creek – Payne County
Bitter Creek – Grady County
Dams Constructed by Year - Oklahoma
132 Dams at or Beyond Design Life
2015

1090 Dams at or Beyond Design Life
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Aging Dams Need Attention!

Reservoir filling with sediment - 1982 ….

Sedimentation

Same reservoir in 1995

Deterioration
Aging Dams Need Attention!

Water Leaking into Pipe

Cracked Pipe
Downstream development can put people in harms way.
Dam Failures Do Occur!

Impacts can be devastating to people, the local economy, and the environment.
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Watershed Rehabilitation Legislation

“The Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments”
Enacted November 9, 2000
Amends PL-566

Authorizes NRCS to provide communities technical & financial assistance to rehabilitate their aging watershed dams
65% of total costs associated with the rehabilitation project

$$ may not be used for Operation and Maintenance
(O&M continues to be sponsor responsibility)
Anticipating available funds will not address all rehabilitation needs, all sponsor applications must be ranked.

Primary Ranking Considerations:
- Potential for dam failure
- Consequences for dam failure
- State Dam Safety Agency recommendations
- Rapid implementation (availability of State funds)
Opportunities for Joint Efforts

- Dam Safety
- Floodplain Management
- Rehabilitation of Existing Dams
- Municipal Water Supplies
- Wildlife Enhancement
- Wetland Development
- Decommissioning (dam removal)
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Okla Watershed Rehabilitation Status

28 rehabilitation projects funded to date

- $19.7 million
- 8 completed
- 1 under construction
- 6 designed; awaiting construction
- 11 authorized & in or awaiting design
- 1 in planning
The Future for Rehabilitation of Aging Dams in Oklahoma?

- OK Rehabilitation needs: $30 million in next 5 years ($10 mil state; $20 mil federal)
- Competition for funds is fierce!!
Efforts to Fund Local Cost Share Needs

- $30 million Natural Resources Bond/Loan Proposal
  - $10 mil Watershed Rehabilitation
    2:1 match federal (NRCS) vs. state
  - $10 mil Cons. Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
    4:1 match federal (FSA) vs. state
  - $10 mil Invasive Species Control
    Improve water yield in watersheds

- SB 418 - Sen. Jay Paul Gumm
- HJ 1019 – Rep. Don Armes
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