

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

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A LOT MORE THAN A RIPPLE...

By the Communications Director

More than once in recent years June has been a time to respond to and reflect upon significant May flooding. We saw that last year, and now it's been five years since the 2015 floods that ended a drought that extended in some areas of Oklahoma back to about October 2010. So one day, Trey Lam, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, mentioned that in 2015 they had the opportunity to take an aerial look at those floods. That led me back to an OCC story written in 2015, titled, "From drought to flood: The Hammon story." I shared it on Facebook, but in case you missed it, I thought you might like to read it.

HAMMON, Okla. (2015)—One town, two droughts, two floods, two very different results.

Straddling the boundaries of Roger Mills and Custer Counties in a river bend where the Washita River joins Big Kiowa Creek, sits the small town of Hammon. During the Dust Bowl, Hammon baked beneath crushing drought. Crops withered and herds dwindled. Poor land management left the soil hard, erodible and, most cruelly, nearly impervious to water.

When rain finally came to Hammon in April 1934, the hard ground was ill prepared to accept the 14 inch downpour. When its tributaries flooded, the Washita River swelled two miles beyond its banks. The flood that swept through Hammon claimed 17 lives and caused \$53 million dollars in damage adjusted to today's dollars. Families, homes, roads, bridges, railroads and crops all suffered.

After four years of drought, spring 2015 has again brought rains to the town of Hammon. The area received 26 inches of rain between April and May— nearly twice that received in the same period in 1934.

“The dams are making the difference,” said Nena Wells, Upper Washita Conservation District manager. “We’d likely be underwater if it weren’t for them.”

Wells is referring to the 143 flood control dams constructed in Roger Mills County since the 1950s. This network of dams, built along tributary streams of larger rivers, is designed to capture and slow the flow of water as it moves downstream. Compared to zero percent flood control in 1934, the dam network has captured 58 percent of floodwater upstream of Hammon this time, according to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) estimates. As a result, damage in town was minimal.

During Memorial Day weekend, watershed experts with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC), the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and the National Watershed Coalition, surveyed flood control structures from a helicopter.

“We are seeing damage—flooded fields, washed out roads, but nothing like the devastation witnessed in the 1934 floods, and certainly much less than what we would see if the dams weren’t in place,” said Trey Lam, OCC executive director. “Our most important observation is that the dams are functioning as designed.”

Continuous investment in dam maintenance by OCC and conservation districts has kept the structures in peak condition to handle the workload they have been dealt over the last several weeks. To assure the dams’ continued safe function in the future, regular maintenance must remain an ongoing priority. (The photo is of a dam in western Oklahoma working as it should.)



CAMERA ONE, CAMERA TWO...

Milpa Gardens were featured in segments on at least three Oklahoma television stations. In case you missed those, you can find the links below!



Interview with Jimmy Emmons planting Milpa Gardens

May 20, 2020

Channel 4 KFOR – TV, Oklahoma City

“Is This a Great State or What?!”

<https://kfor.com/news/great-state/this-oklahoma-farmer-plants-vegetables-with-his-cover-crops-the-produce-helps-feed-the-whole-county/?fbclid=IwAR2xmeFXonG0h9I4SbWDa2qijpvi-z1ltziZcv6M855iLeiqGDJs1C-9LCI>

Interviews with Trey Lam and Tom Cannon about Milpa Gardens

March 18, 2020

Channel 9 KWTW – TV, Oklahoma City

“Oklahoma Farmers Help Provide Fruits, Vegetables Amid COVID-19”

https://www.news9.com/story/5ec306df5a94870b9a1bea88/farm-to-food-bank:-oklahoma-farmers-help-provide-fruits-vegetables-amid-covid19-?fbclid=IwAR1GdGLdBz5ET8U0TJWkKN76W34JoGeYukZF8SFS9-jQJXFVv_7gRaUrvN8

Interview with Tom Cannon about Milpa Gardens

March 14, 2020

Channel 8 KTUL – TV, Tulsa

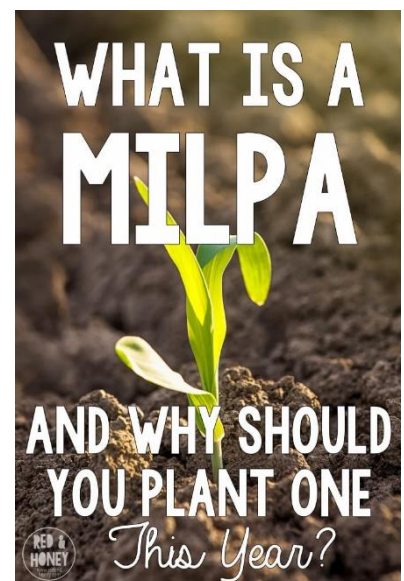
Good Day Tulsa

“Farmers Helping Their Communities”

<https://ktul.com/good-day-tulsa/segments/farmers-helping-their-communities?fbclid=IwAR39Cwf0I6p42h-0U81KoodJzNvlRjZul3w8gvkHjAuZWXANZvqUMJun-WY>

ARTICLE: What is a Milpa, and Why Should You Plant One in Your Garden This Year? - Red and Honey

<https://redandhoney.com/milpa-plant-one/>



CRITTER CLOSEUPS...

By the Water Quality Division

- Late spring and early summer of 2020 might mean a time to stay distanced from other people, but it's still a time for Blue Thumb volunteers to get up close and personal with the critters that live in their creek. Blue Thumb staff have been busy with bug picking sessions and have had to be creative to find places where pickers can safely socially distance themselves.



- The Soil Health and Blue Thumb team are partnering with Oklahoma County, Tulsa County, and Little River Conservation Districts to develop a new urban conservation program. Look for more information in the coming months.



Getting to Know: Josh Hughes- OCC Water Quality Intern, Bristow Office

My name is Josh Hughes and I am the intern working with Wes and the crew at the Bristow office. I was born in Kearney, Nebraska but I was raised for the most part and graduated high school in Gillette, Wyoming. My favorite hobby and things to do include hunting and fishing and spending time outdoors with friends and family. An interesting fact about myself is that I have lived in seven different states so far in my life.

Thank you for the opportunity to be an intern and I am very excited to learn and gain a bunch of knowledge this summer!

AMERICAN BURYING BEETLE SURVEYS

By the Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Division

- The American Burying Beetle (ABB) was federally listed as an endangered species in 1989 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Because it is listed as endangered, any activity that could affect the ABB is regulated. The AML Program must conduct a survey on every reclamation project prior to construction to determine the presence or absence of this endangered species within the project work area. If the American Burying Beetle is detected, the project is put on hold for a year until another survey is conducted the following year. If no presence is detected, the project can proceed with construction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a list of approved surveyors that must be used to perform the surveys. Bid proposals for AML projects this year were due on June 8th.
- ABB surveys for this construction year will be performed on five projects during the first two weeks of August:
 - Taloka Creek South (Haskell County)
 - Loudermilk Phase 1 (Rogers County)
 - Williams-Talala (Rogers County)
 - Oldham (Haskell County)
 - Owens-Cherokee West (Muskogee County)



OCC EMPLOYEE OF THE SECOND QUARTER...

Clancy Green of Administration was recognized as the Oklahoma Conservation Commission "Employee of the Second Quarter" at the June Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting.

The nomination of Clancy pointed out that she contributed in so many ways to all five Area Meetings, and the State OACD Meeting. She has an ability to anticipate what jobs/tasks needs to be done and a willingness to tackle any project/problem. She is always willing to jump in to assist, and her "can do" attitude is refreshing and appreciated.

Clancy is an excellent representative of Field Services and OCC overall at district board meetings. She is skilled at trouble-shooting district problems on her own while also providing training and trusted knowledge. Clancy provides various Districts assistance in answering questions, training, taxes, payroll, board visits, and PO balances/issues.



She handles website tasks, updating the OCC website as needed, and she has worked with the Communications Director and the rest of the team in moving forward on a new look/overall update. Clancy processes pre-claims, cost share claims, and reimbursement claims as needed. She tracks and balances funds, handles the Director election/appointment processes and tracking,

and updates and sends director binders. Clancy also provides Cost Share assistance with Tammy as needed and she helps Trey, Lisa, and Tammy with whatever is asked. Clancy works with Communications Director on the Communications Committee and helping with social media and other things as needed/asked. Her contributions also include Database administration/data maintenance. She files claims and preclaims, sorts mail, answer and also handles purchasing as asked and works diligently to understand all the funding and policies. She is a very dedicated member of the OCC staff. Three of her outstanding characteristics are, she is dependable, knowledgeable and caring. Also, three things we have seen Clancy contribute to the agency, community or the State of Oklahoma are: a team attitude in completing a task, a willingness to help and also a willingness to try/learn, and she encourages co-workers daily. Congratulations to Clancy Green, the OCC Employee of the Quarter! Clancy is shown with Trey Lam, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

OUT CRAWLING IN THE FIELD...

So surely you've seen a picture of a man or woman in a field and it had the caption, of: So and so is out standing in his or her field! (Ha ha) Well, on a recent June day, Greg Scott, of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission was out crawling in his field. Actually, it wasn't his field it was that of the Choctaw Nation and Scott, along with others from OCC, NRCS and the Choctaw Nation were there to record video and take photos for Plant IDs for webinars and other teaching tools, as well as archive purposes. So, here are just a few of the items he found from his view near ground level.



Blackberry



Lanceleaf Coreopsis



Catclaw Sensitive Briar