

**HIGH PLAINS RC&D COUNCIL**  
(A USDA-NRCS SUPPORTED PROGRAM)

**ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT**

**FY 2009**

**May 1, 2008- April 30, 2009**

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**HIGH PLAINS RC&D COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR FY 2009**  
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## **LETTER FROM THE CHAIR**

**To the High Plains RC&D Council Members, Partners, Supporters, and Friends:**

**Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Chair during this past year! It has been an eventful and productive time. We have prepared this Annual Report so that you might get a glimpse of the work that we are doing in the High Plains RC&D region. Our focus continues to be on properly utilizing our natural resources to create jobs and new and expanded businesses. To this end, we have been highly successful and have assisted in the creation of businesses and jobs that are using eastern red cedar, gypsum, atmospheric air, wind, and iodine.**

**There continues to be significant challenges in operating and maintaining a non-profit corporation. These issues became magnified after the events of 911. The government ceased to allow administrative funds to be obtained from federal grants and diverted those administrative funds to the war effort. While this did not detract from our ability to obtain grants, it seriously impacted our ability to administer those grants. We have gone from three full time employees and the federal coordinator to one-part time employee and the coordinator, and the workload has greatly increased. We want the citizens to be aware that there are significant costs incurred in keeping a non-profit eligible to receive grants, including annual audits and filings, surety bonds, and insurance to mention a few. When we assist you in obtaining grants, it is because of a small group of dedicated people who give of their time and money to keep us going. We can always use contributions. We see many opportunities to apply for and obtain grants for our region, but we have not been able to apply because we simply do not have the money or staff to administer them. As a result, we have had to prioritize and do not apply for as many grants as we are capable of receiving.**

**We can thank our many great partners in our successful rural development efforts over this past year. We are indebted to them and they are acknowledged in this report. It doesn't matter who gets the credit, it just matters that it happens.**

**In closing, I want to thank all of you for your untiring efforts, support, and encouragement. There is much to be done and it will take all of us continuing to work together as partners.**

---

**Coleta Bratten  
Chair**

**July 30, 2009**

# **HIGH PLAINS RC&D ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT**

## **2009**

### **INTRODUCTION**

High Plains RC&D publishes this report annually in order to inform the people about the work and accomplishments of High Plains RC&D. The format for this report has been changed from those reports of the past. As a federally designated resources conservation and development area, High Plains RC&D is required to address regional issues in four major areas referred to as elements. These four elements are: (1) land conservation, (2) water management, use, and conservation, (3) community and economic development, and (4) land management. The council establishes goals and objectives for each of these issues. This report will identify those goals and objectives for each element and discuss progress that has been made toward those goals during this past fiscal year.

### **HIGH PLAINS RC&D MISSION STATEMENT**

The High Plains RC&D shall serve as an advocate for area and community improvement. High Plains RC&D supports the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources to improve the general level of economic activity and to enhance the environment and standard of living in the High Plains RC&D area.

### **HIGH PLAINS RC&D VISION**

People working together to accomplish locally led conservation and development of natural resources and the economic development of our communities.

### **HIGH PLAINS RC&D COUNCIL SERVICES**

- \*High Plains RC&D provides assistance for the development and implementation of local project plans.
- \*High Plains RC&D assists by being a referral and coordinating agency to bring together as many resources as possible in dealing with local problems and projects.
- \*High Plains RC&D serves as an information source for all people who are interested in Northwest Oklahoma.
- \*High Plains RC&D does economic development research, and disseminates that research where needed and requested.
- \*High Plains RC&D assists communities in their search for local projects that solve needs and bring dollars into the area.
- \*High Plains RC&D serves as a 501 (c ) (3) non-profit corporation for its existing members and other worthwhile non-profit projects.
- \*High Plains RC&D promotes Northwest Oklahoma and its existing businesses, resources, and serves at every opportunity.

## **RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Resource conservation and development areas were authorized by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962, to provide rural development services to multi-county areas across the United States. The RC&D areas came into being when Congress realized that, by placing enormous conservation programs on the land, that the community was often being ignored and that those conservation programs sometimes adversely affected the communities. The RC&D program was established to assist the rural communities and their needs. RC&D areas are locally organized, sponsored, and directed. Each RC&D Council has its own locally defined goals. RC&D's are unique programs with the purpose being community development and utilization of natural resources to improve the general level of economic activity and to enhance the standard of living in the RC&D area. RC&D leverages limited federal dollars with other funds to accomplish projects with its 501 (c) (3) non-profit status which allows them to seek funding for projects from both governmental and non-governmental sources.

### **PAST CHAIRS OF HIGH PLAINS RC&D**

**Hal Clark**

Cimarron County Conservation District

**C. R. 'Chuck' Smith**

Harper County Conservation District

**Kirk Fisher**

Oklahoma Economic Development Authority

**Mead Ferguson**

Woodward County Conservation District

**Pauline Fahle**

Dewey County Conservation District

**Diann Adams**

Private Business

### **HIGH PLAINS RC&D COUNCIL PARTNERS**

High plains RC&D is grateful to so many partners who have helped in projects and programs. The success that High Plains RC&D has enjoyed would not have been possible without the contributions of these partners who have provided funding, administrative, technical assistance, and other support. The partners include:

USDA-NRCS, ASCOG RC&D, Beaver County Conservation District, Buffalo Chamber of Commerce, Cimarron County Conservation District, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Dewey County Conservation District, Dewey County Economic Development Coalition, East Woods County Conservation District, El Llano Estacado RC&D, Ellis County Conservation District, Farm Aid, Great Plains RC&D, Harper County Conservation District, Hooker Main Street, Kenton Historical Society, Kerr Center, Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, The Last Buffalo, Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative, Oklahoma Arts Council, Oklahoma White Wheat Producers Alliance, High Plains Conservation Tillage Alliance, North American Wetlands Council, Northwestern Oklahoma State

University, Oklahoma Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Agriculture Future of America Foundation, Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma Wildlife and Prairie Heritage Alliance, Oklahoma Quail Unlimited, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, Southern Great Plains Research Station, Dry Fabrication, Inc., Panhandle OSU Research Station, ARS-USFA, Sutton Avian Research Center, Texas County Commissioners, Texas County Conservation District, Town of Buffalo, City of Guymon Tourism and Conventions, Tri-County Electric, Woods County Conservation District, Woods County Industrial Foundation, Western Governor's Association, Wheatland RC&D, Woodward County Commissioners, Woods County Commissioners, Dewey County Commissioners, Woodward County Conservation District, Panhandle Implement Company, Texas Prairie Rivers Region, Inc., Oklahoma Wheat Commission, Comanche Pool Resource Foundation, Santa Fe Trails RC&D, Cherokee Hills RC&D, Cross Timbers RC&D, Fun Country RC&D, Oklahoma Association of RC&D, Monsanto, Robbins Sharpshooter Ag Consulting, High Plains Career Tech, Rural Enterprises, Inc., Oklahoma Department of Ag, Food and Forestry, Agricultural Diversification and Enhancement Board, Barton Investment Group Manufacturing, Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence, Inc., Environmentally Correct Concepts, Inc., Oklahoma Agriculture Mediation Program, Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Harper County Community Hospital, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, GC Coal Mines, Inc. Freedom State Bank, Conservation Technology Information Center, Clear Creek Ranch, Wind Energy Partners of Oklahoma, City of Woodward, Woodward Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma Carbon Coalition, Brix-Berg International, Global Envirotech, Iochem, Sunbelt-C-Anchor Products.

### HIGH PLAINS COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

As of April 30, 2009

#### BEAVER COUNTY

Marilyn Newman, Beaver County Conservation District (Executive Board Member)  
C. Todd Ogletree, Individual  
Carey Manley, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member

#### CIMARRON COUNTY

Leon Apple (Secretary) and Debbie Apple  
Iris Imler, Cimarron County Conservation District  
Jane and Bobby Apple, Hitching Post, Kenton  
Hal Clark, Cimarron County Conservation District  
Robert Boccock, Cimarron Industrial Park Authority  
Cherrie Brown, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member  
Fred Brown, Individual  
Allan Griggs, Kenton Mercantile

**DEWEY COUNTY**

**Coleta Bratten, Dewey County Conservation District, Vice Chair**

**Pauline Fahle (Executive Board Member)**

**Charles Shaw**

**Dorothy Clark, Taloga Senior Citizens**

**R. W. Collier, Individual**

**Justin Fox, Town of Taloga**

**Roger Moore, Individual**

**Michael Morris, Individual**

**Jimmie Purvine, Individual**

**George Seal, Cedar Ridge Farms**

**June Seal, Dewey County Jailhouse Museum**

**Keith Wilson, Individual**

**Paul Clark, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member**

**Travis Dennett, Bank of Vici**

**Charles Hurt, Dewey County Conservation District**

**Corene Seal, Individual**

**Gerald Whetstone, Town of Seiling**

**Richard Craven, Town of Vici**

**ELLIS COUNTY**

**Kenny Knowles, Secretary, Individual**

**Clinton Stahlman, Conservation District**

**C. A. Wheeler, Clear Creek Ranch**

**Terrell Howard, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member**

**HARPER COUNTY**

**Ray Yauk, Executive Board Member**

**Diann Adams, Immediate Past Chair**

**David Cook, Bank of Laverne**

**Brett Cosby, Harper County Conservation District**

**Julie Dome, Individual**

**James Leonard, Town of Buffalo**

**Troy Lotspeich, Individual**

**Christina Richard, Conservation District**

**Sue Selman, Selman Ranch**

**Merle Swineford, Individual**

**David McGough, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member**

**Greg Adams, Individual**

**Bill Bair, Harper County Commissioner**

**Randy Owens, Bank of Laverne**

**TEXAS COUNTY**

**Bert Allard, (Executive Board Member)**  
**Alan Messenger, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member**  
**Aymee Hofferber, Hooker**  
**Marsha Strong, KKBS**  
**Ray Gibson, Individual**  
**Diana Phillips, Individual**  
**Mark Freeman, Individual**

**WOODS COUNTY**

**Jeanne Cole, NWOSU, OSDBC, Treasurer**  
**Brett Smith, Freedom State Bank**  
**Shelly Oliphant, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member**  
**Becky McCray, Individual**  
**Sandy Olson, Individual**

**WOODWARD COUNTY**

**Mead Ferguson, Conservation District, Executive Board Member**  
**Brent Barby, Individual**  
**Ted Craighead, Woodward County Commissioners**  
**Paul McCord, NVEC**  
**Steve Whitaker, Individual**  
**Larry Wiemers, Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation**  
**J. T. Winters, Conservation District**  
**Kimberlee Smithton, High Plains Career Tech, Advisory Member**  
**Stanley Irving, USDA-NRCS, Advisory Member**  
**Jeri Bentley, Woodward County Conservation District**  
**Ron Holweiller, Woodward County**  
**Kathy Moore, Individual**  
**Jim Ruble, Individual**

**TEXAS**

**Gwen Barnhart, Moore County Economic Development, At-Large Member**

**AT LARGE**

**Elaine Adams, Metcalfe Museum**  
**James Covey, Custer City**  
**Laura Girty, ODOC**  
**Harold Gleason, City of Thomas**  
**John Kusel, Ft. Cobb**  
**Toni Pickle, Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Kingfisher**  
**Recia Garcia, OSU Extension**  
**Brad Venuto, USDA-NRCS**  
**Charles Naff, Individual**  
**Albert Knopf, Individual**  
**Ellen Knopf, Individual**

**Wendy Lauritzen, Individual  
Paul Todd, Individual  
Alden Miller, Individual**

**HIGH PLAINS RC&D STAFF**

**Holly Yauk, Programs Manager  
Tom Lucas, USDA-NRCS, RC&D Coordinator**

**OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE AND PRAIRIE HERITAGE ALLIANCE STAFF**

**Pauline Fahle, Chair  
Holly Yauk, Secretary**

**USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICES**

**Ron Hilliard  
State Conservationist**

**Gary O-Neill  
Assistant State Conservationist**

**Lanny Miller  
Assistant State Conservationist**

**George Townsley  
EWP Coordinator**

**David McKay  
Area Resource Engineer**

**Jasper Parker  
Terri Daniels  
Public Affairs**

**OKLAHOMA RC&D COORDINATORS**

**Marty Hern, Cherokee Hills  
Andy Tucker, Cross Timbers  
Angela Williams, Fun Country  
Larry Wright, Great Plains  
Scott Pace, Ouachita Mountains  
Greg Kindell, Tallgrass  
Carl Smith, Wheatland  
Tom Lucas, High Plains  
(Vacant) Chisholm Trail RC&D**

**OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF RC&D OFFICERS**

**James Alridge, Chair**

**Jeff Lockett, Vice Chair**

**Randy Cotten, Secretary-Treasurer**

**CONGRESSMAN AND LEGISLATORS**

**US Rep. Frank Lucas, Congressman, 3<sup>rd</sup> District**

**Troy White, Field Representative to Congressman Lucas**

**US Senator James Inhofe**

**John Collison, Field Representative to Senator Inhofe**

**US Senator Tom Coburn**

**State Senator Bryce Marlatt**

**State Representative Gus Blackwell**

**State Representative Jeff Hickman**

**State Representative Percy Walker**

**HIGH PLAINS RC&D MAJOR PROJECT AND ACTIVITY SUMMARY**

**High Plains RC&D Council responds to requests for assistance from organizations, businesses, and individuals within the eight county areas. This assistance may take the form of providing information, assisting with identifying potential sources of funding for a project, or may involve putting together a team of rural development specialists to address a particular issue. As one might imagine, over time, the RC&D Council becomes involved in a wide range of projects. Some of the major projects in each of the elements and the amounts of funding that the RC&D has assisted with are discussed in the following pages. Some of the projects may be listed in more than one of the four required elements that RC&D must address.**

**LAND CONSERVATION**

**The Council has identified projects for this element as follows:**

**#46-Biomass Conversion to Energy**

**#152-Distributed Energy (cedar gasification)**

**#162-Farm Bill Education**

**#145-Oklahoma Agritourism**

**#03-High Plains Initiative**

**#84-Oklahoma Wildlife & Prairie Heritage Alliance**

**#83-Grasslands Management Education**

**#153-Ranch Conversation III**

**#127-Hazardous Fuel Removal for Economic Development**

**#150-Tree Growout Project**

**#160-Eastern Red Cedar Research**

**#144-Doby Springs Park**

**#157-SASDA Conference**

Progress that has been made toward these goals under this element are discussed in following paragraphs.

**Distributed Energy (#152)**

The first phase of this project was the development of a design for an eastern red cedar gasifier. The gasifier has been designed and is capable of delivering gas to a high end user at prices less than the current cost of natural gas. The gas from this gasifier can also be used to provide fuel to a gas fired electrical generator, making it possible to generate electricity from eastern red cedar. A provisional patent has been applied for and funding for the design of this gasifier was provided by Bob Ashworth, Pauline Fahle, Wheatland RC&D, and High Plains RC&D.

**Farm Bill Education (#162)**

This project was led by High Plains RC&D, NRCS, and the OSU Cooperative Extension Service, and involved many other partners as well. This was a statewide project and eight Farm Bill/Economic Stimulus Forums were held across the state to deliver information to the general public. Over 500 people attended these forums which were held at Stillwater, Pryor, Goodwell, McAlester, El Reno, Sulphur, Woodward, and Altus. Funding and support for these projects was provided by NRCS, OSU Extension Service, Rural Development, Oklahoma Conservation Tribal Advisory Council, Farm Service Agency, Rural Enterprises, Inc, Epic Touch, and Woodward Tourism and Convention Bureau.

**Oklahoma Agritourism(#145)**

This project is a statewide effort to develop Oklahoma's agritourism industry. High Plains RC&D received a grant from USDA-Rural Development to assist in this marketing effort by providing funding for map development, printing, and other marketing materials. Other major partners in the effort included the Oklahoma Department of Tourism, and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry. This project will be completed in the next few months when the economic impact study is completed, which was part of the grant activities. Maps are available from the partners and through many of Oklahoma's tourism centers.

**High Plains Initiative( #03)**

This was a long term project that High Plains RC&D began in response to landowner and producer concern over the possible listing of the Lesser Prairie Chicken as an endangered species. The Council took broad and decisive steps to attempt to prevent the listing, knowing the official listing would impose unwanted regulations and significant hardships on producers. In late 1998, the Council joined the five- state, Western Governor's Association led, High Plains Partnership for Species-at-Risk, and suggested the idea for a "Ranch Conversation" as a way to bring producers and agencies together to discuss what could be done to save the prairie chicken and prevent the listing. The first "ranch" conversation led to a habitat management program with support from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the EPA. It marked the first time in the history of the endangered species act (ESA) that concerned people had attempted to prevent a species from being listed. The effort was noteworthy in that funds are not available under the ESA until after

a species is designated as endangered. Several council members have traveled all over the United States to provide information to agencies, organizations and congressional members. Several grants over time brought the funds raised to over \$2.0 million. The project has been featured in National Geographic and has received both national and international attention as a new way to do business with the government. The private land acres under voluntary habitat management in the High Plains RC&D area are slightly over 122,000 acres, including almost 22,000 acres of public lands. This project involved many, many partners and was completed this past fiscal year.

#### **The Oklahoma Wildlife & Prairie Heritage Alliance (OWPHA) (#84)**

The attention that has been and is being focused on wildlife development and opportunities for additional income for producers through wildlife related enterprises brought the need for an organization to coordinate and facilitate communication and cooperation among landowners, agencies, and citizens. Colin Berg of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Diann Adams, Pauline Fahle, Mead Ferguson, and a handful of others were among the first to recognize the need for an organization and obtained some initial funding. OWPHA was officially formed in 2004 and includes stakeholders from 33 western Oklahoma counties. OWPHA is now in its sixth year of operation. Pauline Fahle is Chair and is currently serving in the Coordinator role until funds can be raised to hire a Coordinator. The mission of OWPHA is to encourage conservation of Oklahoma's wildlife and prairie heritage by increasing private landowners' awareness of incentive funding, giving technical assistance, education and rangeland program guidance. OWPHA has secured over \$455,000 in funding, has held a host of meetings all across Western Oklahoma and has moved the Great Plains Wildlife Trail forward by gigantic proportions, with the second reprinting of the map now available. OWPHA is provided office space through the High Plains RC&D Council. Through OWPHA, landowners can receive information on all agency programs and obtain assistance is contacting the proper funding agency. The financial partners in OWPHA include: Ducks Unlimited, High Plains RC&D, Johnston Seed Company, USDA-NRCS, Oklahoma City Sportsman's Club, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Pheasants Forever, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, Quail Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Wildlife Management Institute, Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma.

#### **Grasslands Management Education(#83)**

High Plains RC&D obtained \$224,000 in funding to deliver grassland management education programs to producers in Oklahoma and Kansas, who are part of the Prairie States Coalition region. Programs were held in Oklahoma City, Beaver, and Taloga Oklahoma, and two in Kansas in the Comanche Pool region. Over 400 producers attended these sessions, and the information was well received and High Plains RC&D has received requests to do additional seminars. Partners in this project included: NRCS, Beaver and Dewey County Conservation Districts, Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Oklahoma and Kansas Grazing Land Initiatives, and the Comanche Pool. This project is considered complete.

### **Ranch Conversation III (#153)**

As a result of recent efforts to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken as endangered caused High Plains RC&D to see the need to bring stakeholders together for “Ranch Conversation III.” Over 120 producers and citizens attended the “ranch conversation” and were updated on the status of the Lesser Prairie Chicken. As a result, High Plains RC&D and OWPFA , together with OSU, and other partners are making an effort to identify an organization that could deliver safe harbor agreements to producers who are voluntarily improving habitat, but are not protected by a candidate conservation agreement.

### **Hazardous Fuel Removal for Economic Development (#127)**

Work has been completed on the project that cleared cedar and salt cedar along the North Canadian River, monitoring changes in stream flow and ground water levels, while using the Eastern Red Cedar for economic development. This project was funded by the Forestry Service Department of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry with funds from the US Forestry Service. The project has received recognition as a “Creative Moment” by the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority (OETA) and a 30 second spot has been running on statewide television for 60 days. In addition to clearing the 90 acres of land which was 90% cedar canopy cover and using it in the manufacture of cedar fiber for use in controlling circulation down hole in oil and gas drilling, considerable research has been done. After field drying for six months, chipping, transporting to the plant for processing, and bagging, the tract yielded slightly less than 19 tons per acre, which was the net weight of the processed cedar which was loaded on the trucks.

### **Tree Growout Project (#150)**

This is a partnership project with the Wheatland RC&D Council, which has provided funding for this project through its various grant sources. Trees are being grown at the William S. Key Correctional Center and are available at no cost to public entities. Over 20,000 trees have been started and given to cities and towns, and about 17,000 are available. This is a multi-year project and is in its fourth year.

### **Eastern Red Cedar Research (#160)**

High Plains RC&D has enjoyed a long term relationship with the Grazinglands Laboratory at Ft. Reno and the two agencies have worked together on research concerning Eastern Red Cedar. High Plains RC&D has received a small grant from the Agricultural Research Service to continue this work.

### **Doby Springs Park (#144)**

High Plains RC&D has worked in a partnership with the Harper County Conservation District, Town of Buffalo, OWPFA to improve the historical Doby Springs Park. A grant from the Oklahoma Department of Tourism, Soil and Water Conservation Fund is being used to repair facilities, purchase new facilities, and construct a walking trail, with plant identification information throughout the trail. This project is almost complete at this time.

### SASDA Conference (#157)

The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry was host this year to the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture's Annual Conference. High Plains RC&D served as the financial administrator for this project. Over 100 participants attended from 17 states and Puerto Rico. Oklahoma's Terry Peach serves as Chairman of this association.

### WATER MANAGEMENT

The Council has identified projects for this element as follows:

#156-Oakes Bridge EWP

#127-Hazardous Fuel Removal for Economic Development

#160- Eastern Red Cedar Research

#83-Grasslands Management

#149-Rural Water District

#160-Farm Bill Education

#163-#176-EWP Projects in Dewey, Woods, & Woodward Counties

#177-Cedar Mapping

#181-Gaskill EWP

#182-Agricultural Water Enhancement Program

Progress that has been made toward these goals is discussed in following pages.

### Oakes Bridge EWP (#156)

This was an Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Project in Dewey County. Funds were obtained to protect a concrete and steel bridge on a paved farm to market road. Total cost of this project was \$136,440. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program, often referred to as EWP 216 or EWP, is a program that is administered by NRCS. The purpose of this program is to provide funding to local governments that can be used to protect bridges and other structures that are threatened by a storm event. Using federal funds in this way prevents the taxpayers from having to bear the cost of building new structures. High Plains RC&D has been a leader in delivering this program to the region. 53 EWP projects have been completed in the region and 15 more have been approved and will be completed this year. Not only has millions of dollars worth of public and private property been protected, millions of dollars have been spent locally in the construction of these projects. Projects #163-176 and Project #181 are the 15 EWP projects that are pending. Bids are now being taken on 14 of those projects and the work will be completed this year.

Project #127 (Hazardous Fuel Removal for Economic Development, #160 (Eastern Red Cedar Research), #83( Grasslands Management), #160 (Farm Bill Education).

The status of these projects are discussed in the land management element.

### Cedar Mapping Project (#177)

High Plains RC&D, early on, recognized the need to map and inventory stands of Eastern Red Cedar in order to be able to assist industries in properly locating their business or industry. High Plains RC&D has raised \$135,000 to pay for the cost of mapping 18 counties in Oklahoma, including five counties in the region. This mapping has resulted in the establishment of 73 new businesses and over 200 new jobs, although not all of them are in the High Plains region. The partners in this project include: Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry, School Lands Commission, USDA-NRCS, and USDA-ARS.

### Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (#182)

High Plains RC&D will receive a \$275,000 grant from NRCS to assist producers in the Beaver, Cimarron, and Texas counties improve the efficiency of their water use. The three conservation districts are partners with High Plains RC&D. Details of this project will be announced soon.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Council has identified the following projects for this element:

- #82-Community Economic Recovery Planning
- #112-Revolving Loan Fund
- #146-Intermediary Relending Program
- #151-Buffalo Professional Office Building
- #143-Cimarron County Industry
- #151-Oxygen Plant
- #159-Ion Exchange Project
- #144-Doby Springs Park
- #150-Tree Growout Project
- #84-Oklahoma Wildlife & Prairie Heritage Alliance
- #145-Oklahoma Agritourism
- #127-Hazardous Fuel Removal for Economic Development
- #03-High Plains Initiative
- #83-Grasslands Management Education
- #152-Distributed Energy
- #160-Eastern Red Cedar Research
- #116-Northwest Oklahoma Alliance
- #179-Solar Energy

Progress that has been made on these projects for the community development element is discussed in the following paragraphs.

### Community Economic Recovery Planning (#82)

High Plains RC&D received a \$56,000 grant from NRCS to assist communities in the five-state Prairie States Coalition region develop community economic recovery plans, based on utilization of natural resources. The need for this project was determined when a High Plains RC&D survey revealed that 78% of the rural communities in the region did not have any type of plan. Twenty three of these have

been completed, with four more plans in progress at this time. Plans have been or are being done in Oklahoma, Colorado, and Kansas.

#### Revolving Loan Fund (#112)

High Plains RC&D received a \$99,000 grant from USDA-Rural Development to establish a small revolving loan fund to assist small and emerging businesses in accessing the capital needed start or expand their businesses. These funds have been used to make loans not exceeding \$15,000 to any single entity, and not over five years in length. Interest earned is being added back into the loan fund, which has now grown to over \$105,000. The Council has approved 12 loans, 2 have been repaid, and 10 active loans remain. The fund is fully loaned out at this time. Twenty five jobs have been created by these loans. High Plains RC&D is currently working on an Intermediary Loan Application (Project #146). When and if this application is funded, it will create a much larger loan fund (\$750,000), but it will have to be paid back. It will allow the RC&D to make 20 year loans. The revolving loan funds and intermediary loan funds are often used to provide needed equity for a business to obtain additional funds through institutional banks and funding organizations.

#### Oxygen Plant (#151)

High Plains RC&D has assisted in the development of a new plant that will manufacture oxygen, nitrogen, and argon from atmospheric air. The multi-million dollar plant is under construction at this time and should go on line later in the fall.

#### Ion Exchange Project (#159)

High Plains RC&D has assisted two companies who have developed the technology to extract iodine from brine water from producing oil and gas wells and disposal wells. This is a multi-million dollar project that will ultimately employ 160 people. The first unit is under construction at this time and will go on line in late 2009. The iodine will be used to manufacturer ethyl iodide, a safe agricultural fumigant that will be used to replace the more dangerous methyl bromide which can no longer be used after existing stocks are depleted. This project will ultimately double the domestic production of iodine. A little known fact is that for the last 26 years, 100% of the domestic iodine is produced in the High Plains Region.

#### Northwest Oklahoma Alliance (#116)

High Plains RC&D provides administrative support to the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance which is an organization created to market the resources of the region. The RC&D assisted in obtaining a \$75,000 grant to start this organization. It annually conducts a legislative appreciation dinner which has had huge response. This is expected to be an on-going project with the RC&D.

### LAND MANAGEMENT

The projects that have been identified in connection with this element are listed below.

- #143-Cimarron County Industry
- #84-Oklahoma Wildlife & Prairie Heritage Alliance
- \$145-Agritourism Project
- #46-Biomass Conversion to Energy
- #152-Distributed Energy (cedar gasification)
- #160-Eastern Red Cedar Research
- #03-High Plains Initiative
- #83-Grasslands Management Education
- #153-Ranch Conversation III

Note: Other projects listed as goals under the four elements have either been discussed previously, have had no activity this year, or are at a proprietary stage in their development that the details of the project cannot be reported at this time.

### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Rural development success is improved if the Council continues to make people aware of the work and opportunity that exists to improve the standard of living in the High Plains region. The Council has conducted an aggressive outreach program this past year. Some of the activities included:

1. Mailing list of over 1200 citizens.
2. Preparation of the Annual Plan and long-term (5 year) Area Plan.
3. Preparation of the Annual Activities Report.
4. Facilitated locally led conservation meetings.
5. Participation in other rural development organizations.
6. Conducts an Annual Meeting and five bi-monthly meetings.
7. Recognized Council partners by presentation of awards.

### LEVERAGE

One of the measures of the success of an RC&D program is leverage. That term refers to using limited federal dollars and membership dues to create additional funding or other input in funding or programs into the area. Since 1998, when NRCS first provided funding for the RC&D, NRCS funds have been leveraged at approximately 164 to 1, meaning that for every dollar of NRCS funds, 164 was added to the area in the form of grants program monies, and new business investments. Approximately \$895,000 of NRCS funds have been used and over \$150 million in grants, programs and new business investments have been delivered to the High Plains RC&D area. The membership dues, now a contribution, have an even greater leverage.

## SUMMARY

**Another measure of the success of an RC&D Council is the extent to which it impacts the economy beyond the direct funding that is used for project development and completion. No attempt has been made to calculate that impact for the purposes of this annual report; however, there is no doubt that the High Plains RC&D programs are helping the area. Over \$50 million of private and public property has been protected through the expenditure of \$3.7 million in government funds through 51 EWP projects. The High Plains Initiative and the Oklahoma Wildlife & Prairie Heritage Alliance have facilitated the creation of new jobs and are adding tourism dollars to the area.**

**The High Plains RC&D Council has taken the position of attempting to conduct projects where no other agencies have programs and bringing the rural development partnership to bear on those projects. Most of the projects that High Plains RC&D has conducted are ones that do not necessarily fall into other agencies areas of interest. The High Plains RC&D Council has become known for being on the “cutting edge” of new resource development ideas.**

**The Council believes that no one organization can be all things to all people and serve the expressed needs. The council supports the development of other organizations that can meet the needs more efficiently while creating additional economic activity. All of these organizations have been formed to fill a need and High Plains RC&D can best assist by facilitating the formation of these organizations and then continuing to support them as they perform their mission.**

## COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

**Dear Council Members, Friends, and Supporters:**

**How thankful I am to have the opportunity to work together with all of you! In behalf of NRCS and the rural development partnership, we take great pride as we see the accomplishments and the successes that are taking place in the High Plains RC&D Council area! You are a great example of what volunteers can do to make life better using the locally led process.**

**I want to express my deep appreciation to you for your willingness to help, share your ideas, knowledge and time. Your devotion to Northwest Oklahoma has become evident to others as High Plains RC&D has received both state and national attention for some of its projects. I wish to thank Coleta Bratten for her great leadership this past year. As we elect new leaders to serve for the coming year, I hope that you will continue to support High Plains RC&D.**

**None of us can accomplish things alone. The High Plains RC&D is all about partnerships and getting things done by working or partnering together. I commend the Council on their ability to bring new people and new partners together to work on our issues. We still face huge challenges as we try to recover our area economically. Our entire area was placed under a “general and economic distress” designation due to outmigration by the US Secretary of Agriculture in 1998 and we remain under that designation yet today.**

**As we struggle with overcoming our loss of people, business, and infrastructure that have plagued us since the Dust Bowl, I want to assure you that you are making a huge difference. Because of all of you, our future is brighter. I believe that you will ultimately succeed in restoring economic vitality to our region. Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” Thank you for caring and for making a difference. Together we can make our life better.**

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**Tom Lucas**  
**Coordinator, USDA-NRCS**

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