

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2015-2016 Performance Report

Oklahoma Conservation Commission

AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:

To conserve, protect and restore Oklahoma's natural resources working in collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners on behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma.

Adopted by the Conservation Commission at its regular board meeting on November 05, 2012 in conjunction with the agency's FY 2013-2018 Strategic Plan.

LEAD ADMINISTRATOR:

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GOVERNANCE:

The Conservation Commission is governed by a five person board. Commissioners are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate to a five year term. Commissioners by statute must be a conservation district director. There are five statutorily designated commission areas in the state. The agency executive director is selected by the governing board. At the present time there are no standing committees or subgroups of the Commission. Commissioners as of July 2015 are:

- Area 1. Karl Jett
- Area 2. Mike Rooker
- Area 3. Scotty Herriman
- Area 4. Deanna LeGrand
- Area 5. Bill Clark

The Commission houses the Office of Geographic Information which is managed by the State Geographic Information Coordinator. The Commission's Executive Director appoints, after consultation with the State Geographic Information Council, the State Geographic Information Coordinator. The Commission also serves as the Chair of the 19-member State Geographic Information Council.

GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY: - N/A

Minutes of the Conservation Commission monthly meetings can be accessed at www.conservation.ok.gov. The Commission does not have an attendance policy for commissioners.

MODERNIZATION EFFORTS:

1. The Commission is working cooperatively with the Office of Enterprise and Management Services to utilize a myriad of their services including: construction contract management; mail; risk management for conservation districts; motor pool; state surplus property; office space leasing; and information technology management.
2. Continuing the use of Lidar photography to eliminate the need for on the ground surveying to prepare breach inundation maps for high hazard dams and also using this photography for design work to rehabilitate dams and reclaim abandoned mine land.
3. Continuing the implementation of a Dam Watch program to allow conservation districts to be automatically notified when rainfall events threaten flood control dams and endanger public safety.
4. The Commission continues to upgrade the agency's website to increase and update information and to use social media to find new audiences and make agency information more accessible to a larger number of people.
5. Implemented the sharing of personnel resources between conservation districts in an effort to cover core conservation responsibilities in a downsizing environment. The best example of this is the creation of the watershed aide position to assist with the operation and maintenance of upstream flood control dams in multiple conservation districts. Likewise, the Commission has combined multiple positions as attrition has occurred.
6. Provided GIS data base to the Okie One-Call System to include the state's 2,107 upstream flood control dams.
7. The commission began using the OMES conference calling/webinar service which allows for a significant reduction in travel time and expenses for Commission staff and partners to conduct meetings. In addition, this service allows some partners to participate in meetings who would otherwise not have been able to attend.
8. Since 2004 the Office of Geographic Information has been working with state agencies to eliminate duplication of effort in developing, maintaining and delivering geographic information. This information is used by all levels of government, academia, businesses and the public in everyday planning and decision-making. A statewide web-based clearinghouse for authoritative geospatial data is being developed to deliver this information to a wide spectrum of users in a diverse set of formats, <http://ogi/search.aspx>.

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What steps has the agency taken to cut costs and/or eliminate waste?

1. For the past four budget cycles we have been reducing the number and costs of both Commission and Conservation District employees. This has been accomplished by combining job duties when positions become vacant and by converting some full-time benefitted positions to part-time positions without benefits.
2. Expanded the outsourcing of engineering work for the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation division with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to include both construction management and project design.
3. Trained in-house staff to complete biological sample identification previously outsourced, which has already save the agency \$20,000 - \$30,000 per year for the past two years and with future certifications will save another \$35,000 - \$45,000 that can be directed towards additional water monitoring.
4. Continued efforts to reduce agency travel expenses by sharing rooms, working longer hours instead of staying overnight, reducing the vehicle fleet and limiting out of state travel.
5. When replacing high mileage leased vehicles, when possible, the commission has purchased used vehicles from Office of Management and Enterprise Services. It is estimated that buying vs. leasing reduces the cost of vehicle use by $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ over the life of the vehicle. The commission is also reducing the number of vehicles it maintains and facilitating vehicle migration among very high use and lower use parts of the program to even out mileage.
6. Participated fully with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services to transfer agency information technology functions to their IT Division.
7. The Office of Geographic Information is utilizing open source software in the development of the state geospatial clearinghouse which eliminates being dependent on vendor-specific software licensing and maintenance fees.
8. The Office of Geographic Information has developed a strategy for the delivery of geospatial services that leverages the power and efficiencies of the state's information technology infrastructure while maintaining the flexibility necessary to have agency-specific GIS specialists directly involved in supporting the agency's business processes.

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CORE MISSION:

What services are you required to provide which are outside of your core mission? None

Are any services you provide duplicated or replicated by another agency? No

Are there services which are core to your mission which you are unable to perform because of requirements to perform non-core services elsewhere? No.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Conservation Programs -

- Completed the required dam safety inspections of 2,107 upstream flood control dams.
- Performed operation and maintenance on 309 upstream flood control dams including 29 high hazard upstream flood control dams.
- Conducted 550 emergency safety inspections during the months of April – July 2015 as a result of record setting rainfall events.
- Responded to more than 25,000 Okie One-Call locate tickets to prevent damage to the \$2 billion public infrastructure of flood control dams.
- Completed the required dam safety modification of two (2) high hazard upstream flood control dams. Leveraged state funding to receive \$2 of federal funds for every \$1 of state funds expended.
- Produced 8 breach inundation maps for high hazard flood control dams to identify potential damage locations and lives at risk.
- Prepared 20 Emergency Action Plans for high hazard flood control dams.
- Locally Led Cost Share Program: Leveraged \$1.8 million in state funds against \$2.1 million in private funds to apply Best Management Practices to improve soil health and water quality.

Water Quality -

- Ranked second in the nation and in the top five for a fifth year in a row for the reported load reductions of nitrogen and phosphorus contaminants to Oklahoma's streams and rivers (EPA's Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program)
- Delisted 3 additional streams from the EPA's list of impaired streams for a total of 48 delisted streams, which places Oklahoma as second in the nation for delisted streams.
- Maintained over 250 water quality monitoring sites around the state and collected over 1,500 water samples. Conducted more than 45 fish collections including aquatic habitat assessments and more than 220 invertebrate collections.

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- Conservation Education - provided natural resource education to over 2,300 students and teachers. Continued to chair the Environmental Education Coordinating Council.
- Staff and programs received honors and awards by Governor Fallin's Office, Keep Oklahoma Beautiful, and the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Trained Conservation Districts and local agricultural producers on the benefits of soil health and practices necessary to preserve and conserve soil resources to protect water sources, reduce flooding, improve wildlife habitat, and feed and clothe the world.
- Completed voluntary conservation programs in several high priority watersheds including Honey Creek Arm of Grand Lake, Illinois River and Eucha / Spavinaw Lake. Preliminary results indicated improving water quality and potential additional delistings from the impaired waterbodies list.

Abandoned Mine Lands Program -

- Continued to address hazards associated with abandoned coal mined lands by reclaiming 87 acres and completing 6 emergency underground mine projects.

District Services -

- In cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the state's 86 conservation districts delivered \$38 million dollars of federal financial conservation assistance through over 2000 contracts to Oklahoma landowners.

Office of Geographic Information -

- The Office of Geographic Information is an integral member of the State Incident Management Team. The Office is also involved in providing GIS support to the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) and supported the SEOC operations during the various tornado outbreaks and flooding events in the spring and summer of 2015.
- The Office of Geographic Information has provided GIS assistance and guidance to several state and local governmental agencies. Some of those include the State Bureau of Investigation, Department of Human Services, Office of Management and Enterprise Services, State Department of Education, Governor, Commissioners of the Land Office, County Commissioners, Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Quality, Oklahoma City Police, Highway Patrol, U.S. Secret Service, Office of Emergency Management and 8 south-central Oklahoma county e911 call centers.
- The state's geospatial data clearinghouse, OKMaps, managed by the Office of Geographic Information has seen significantly increased use. From FY'14 through FY'15 the average number of visitors per month has increased 126%. At the same time the average bandwidth consumed per month has increased 254%.

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PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:

Are any of the services which are performed by the agency also performed in the private sector in Oklahoma? Yes, the operation, maintenance and repair of upstream flood control dams is a function that can be done both by agency and district personnel as well as by private sector companies. Also, the reclaiming of abandoned mine lands can be done by the private sector.

In other states? In a few states some specialized conservation technical assistance is performed by the private sector.

Has the agency been approached by any foundation, for-profit or not-for-profit corporation with efforts to privatize some of the functions of the agency? No.