

Mission: to unite as citizens and actively engage in the preservation of the Spring Creek Watershed

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Spring Creek Coalition
2434 East 56 Place
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105

Spring Creek Watershed Landowners Summer 2016 Newsletter



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What Streams Do!

"It was a tad technical but interesting," noted Wes Combs, one of our Spring Creek residents and participant at April's Stream Dynamics Seminar. And most others seemed to agree, saying that although some of what Dr. Russell Dutnell presented on stream dynamics went "over our heads," they got a lot out of his presentation.



Russ Dutnell (left) talks to Neil Russell at sign-in table.

Dutnell talked to us about sediment transport and channel patterns in streams and rivers. "One thing I found really interesting," noted

Martin Rooney, "was Dutnell's explanation of sinuosity, how streams do not want to run in straight lines, and how curves in a river as big as the Mississippi and as small as Spring Creek follow the same pattern when aerial views of both are shown on the same scale."

Indeed, after Dutnell's presentation we got to see this in action. Dutnell drew a straight line in the sand of the demonstration trailer set up at the Peggs Community Center parking lot. He created a slope by raising one end of the trailer and started water flowing. The straight stream immediately formed curves, and houses we had posed along its banks fell into the stream.

A second major take away from the seminar was "the stream's gonna do what it's gonna do," as resident Shannon Grimes aptly put it. Dutnell cautioned against trying to shape

or change the creek. "Over time," he said, "the creek channel adjusts to the flow and sediment it carries. Attempts to prevent natural channel adjustment are ill advised. It may take decades, but eventually, such as during a major flood event like you had in December, the creek will circumvent these efforts." Dutnell noted that changing the creek flows on your property often has unintended consequences for those upstream or downstream. "Unless you need to protect a valuable structure," he said, "I would not recommend trying to change a stream's flow."

Dutnell did say residents could possibly remove excess gravel deposits, if done selectively. "It is important, if you want to do this that you know the rules," notes SCC board president Beth Rooney. For example, excavating with a backhoe may be allowed, but using a bull dozer in Spring Creek definitely is not. You should contact the Regulatory Office of the Corps of Engineers at 918-669-7400. "I called them this past week," says Rooney, "and Supervisor Michael Ware knew Spring Creek and was very helpful in answering my questions."



Layne Spencer watches the demo water flow.

Know Before You Vote — SQ777

"Right to Farm" and "Right to Harm" are both phrases used to describe State Question (SQ) 777, which will appear on

State Question 777

the Oklahoma ballot on November 8, 2016, along with candidates for president. As the Kirkpatrick Foundation states on its website, “this bill affects everyone who lives in Oklahoma who breathes air, drinks water or eats food, so it’s important to know what it’s really about.”

The SCC board is against this bill. If approved, we believe that it will hamper Oklahoman’s ability to protect its water. SQ777 “is a complex constitutional amendment with far-reaching consequences.” If you have a viewpoint you would like heard, contact us (info@springcreekok.org).

To help you make an informed choice, here is a link to FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on the Kirkpatrick Foundation website: kirkpatrickfoundation.com/sq777-right-to-farm

Your decision at the polls is important. Know before you vote!

OSRC Eliminated, But Mission Continues

As of July 1, the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission (OSRC) will become a division of the Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA).

Created in 1977, the commission has focused on protecting, enhancing and preserving the Illinois River and its tributaries, Barren Fork Creek and Flint Creek for almost forty years.

According to a May 13 article in the Tulsa World, Ed Fite, the commission’s longtime

OSRC Eliminated

executive director, told legislators in March: “We’re here because of the state’s financial woes. What is most important is, whatever the name of the organization, whether its OSRC or GRDA, that core mission continues for which there is no endpoint, the protection of our rivers.”

Ed, his staff, and responsibilities will shift to a division of the GRDA.

In May, the River Management Society recognized Ed Fite for a lifetime of dedication and tenacity in protecting Oklahoma’s scenic rivers. They presented him with their Outstanding Contribution to River Management Award at their national symposium in Boise, Idaho.

The public may not be aware of the dedication and tireless work of Ed Fite, but many of us on the SCC board are. Congratulations Ed, on this well-deserved lifetime achievement award.



Ed Fite receives award
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Living on the Land—Being a Good Steward

Included with this June 2016 issue is a brochure from the Blue Thumb water quality education program on ideas for being a good steward of our water and land. Below are additional good practices for those of us involved in cattle man-

Being a Steward of the Land

agement. Being a good steward of the land is more than just an “environmental ideal.” It can also add to your bottom line.

Sustainable Pasture Management:

Agricultural management in Cherokee, Mayes and Delaware counties is very different from other parts of the state, but basic principles apply everywhere.



Nothing is more basic than soil. Cattlemen know that they are in the grass business, not the cow business. So test it. Periodic soil tests and forage analyses are tools to monitor a pasture’s status. If existing pastures are under full use, then buying inputs to improve the soil could be a wise, long term investment. Good grazing management can transform poor grazing land into healthy, productive pastures. More and better forage means more animal production, which should result in more profit per acre.

Animal rotation is another basic principle. Many managers use controlled grazing plans instead of continuous grazing to increase forage utilization and profits. Livestock is moved between pastures or paddocks at frequent intervals, giving animals access to a limited pasture area over a short period of time. With this system the livestock grazes all plants and no longer “cherry picks.” The animals return to the paddock after the plants have recovered. The roots maintain energy reserves, and the livestock always have high quality forage. Eventually, the plant community becomes more diverse and lush under this type of grazing system. Soil fertility is better because most nutrients cycle through the animals and remain in the paddocks. This is applicable with any size of operation. A simple sys-

Member Feedback

tem of temporary electric fencing may suffice at the outset.

Don’t be shy. Contact your local county extension agent. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is another good source of information on forage production practices appropriate for particular grazing systems. This agency has been given specific responsibility for helping farmers improve the grazing lands of the United States.

Conservation Districts:
Cherokee County, Tahlequah 918-456-1924
Delaware County, Jay, 918-253-8550
Mayes County, Pryor, 918-825-3673

NRCS: Eufala, 918-689-2301

Member Feedback—Responses to Your Concerns from our Member Poll

Comments:
Make contact with the conservation districts (Mayes, Delaware and Cherokee counties) with any new information about the stream and educational efforts that are taking place. Have these districts on the mailing list for newsletters.

Response:
We have made contact with the conservation districts in all 3 counties, and they are in receipt of this newsletter. These guys have a wealth of information regarding everything from gardening to goats, and they will come to you! For contact information, see the article on sustainable pasture management in this newsletter.