

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY

## AGRICULTURE

### USDA CONDUCTS WETLANDS PROGRAM SIGN UP

■(STILLWATER) Oklahoma landowners can have their wetlands and be paid for them, too.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) is conducting a sign up for the Wetlands Reserve Program. The sign up began Nov. 4.

The program is competitive and applicants will improve their opportunities for participation by early enrollment.

"The program now offers landowners more options for wetlands restoration and more time to work with NRCS conservationists to develop a plan to restore and protect wetlands," Ron Clark, NRCS state conservationist, said.

Landowners can sign up at any local NRCS office. Information about the program is also available from local conservation district offices, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Cooperative Extension Service.

To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable and provide significant wetland and wildlife habitat. The program offers landowners three options: permanent easements, 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum 10-year duration. The restoration cost-share agreements provide financial and technical assistance for implementing wetland restoration practices and do not require recorded easements.

No new permanent easements can be enrolled after Oct. 1, until at least 43,333 acres of non-permanent easements are enrolled in the program nationwide.

—U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
11/07/96

## BUSINESS & LABOR

### QUALITY JOBS PROGRAM GETS RESULTS

■(GIT) The Oklahoma Quality Jobs Program Act, the Saving Quality Jobs Act and the Former Military Facility Development Act — an umbrella of job incentive legislation passed in 1993 in Title 68 of the Oklahoma Statutes — was renewed in 1996

through SB689. An original target of the program was assisting industries which generally export their goods and services, and creating growth in industries, which would otherwise not occur. The new law eliminates the sunset provision of the original legislation and requires the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to submit a report every three years, documenting the results of these programs and their cost effectiveness.

First quarter figures are in for the program, and in the first quarter of fiscal 1997, the program has added 1,335 new jobs to Oklahoma, with a final total of 1,832 jobs created when the project is complete, through funding of expansions and new businesses in the state.

Overall, the Quality Jobs Program has added 31 new locations to Oklahoma and expanded 94 Oklahoma companies since their first year of business. Most projects have been in the larger cities of Oklahoma (57.6 percent) but even the small towns have benefited. According to Department of Commerce records, 11 new projects have benefited towns with fewer than 5,000 people, and 3,601 jobs have been added.

Eleven projects with a total of 3,875 jobs have been working in municipalities with between 5,000 and 10,000 people.

In population areas of 10,000 to 50,000 people, 31 projects have brought 10,509 jobs to these areas, and cities with 50,000 to 100,000 people have received 13 projects and added 3,842 jobs.

Cities with over 300,000 population, such as Oklahoma City and Tulsa, have benefited from 59 projects with 30,848 new jobs added.

In three years, 52,675 jobs have been projected on 125 projects, with about 15,000 new jobs right now, Dan Gorin, chief economist with the Department of Commerce, said. Overall, Gorin said, the Quality Jobs Program accounts for 15 percent of the job growth in the state.

—GERRY CHERRY  
11/07/96

*"A country can get more real joy out of just hollering for their freedom than they can if they get it."*

Will Rogers  
*The Autobiography of Will Rogers*  
1949

## CEREMONIES & EVENTS

### SPECIAL VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs is urging all women from throughout Oklahoma to participate in a unique Veterans Day Program.

On Nov. 11, 1996, the women veterans of Oklahoma will be honored for the first time statewide. All men and women veterans across the state, whether serving now or many years ago, are invited to attend.

Ceremonies will begin at 11:00 a.m. just south of the State Capitol at the Historical Building. The guest speaker will be Lieutenant Colonel Denise O'Hara-Webb of Tinker Air Force Base.

A laying of a special wreath to honor past and present veterans will conclude the program.

The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs is committed and proud to assist in this patriotic endeavor.

—OKLA. DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
11/04/96

## CRIME & JUDICIARY

### TASK FORCE URGED TO CONTINUE FUNDING OF INDIGENT LEGAL SERVICES

■(GIT) A joint task force was urged Thursday to protect the state legislature's appropriation to indigent legal services agencies in the state.

"I hope this committee will recommend the continuation of last year's appropriation," Gayla Mitchell, director of Oklahoma Legal Services, told the Joint Task Force to Study Fees for Indigent Legal Services.

If that appropriation, which totaled \$450,000 for fiscal year 1997, is not continued, Mitchell warned the task force, "We will have a terrific budget shortfall that will result in staff cutbacks."

Unlike Oklahoma's Indigent Defense System, which provides legal services in criminal cases, indigent legal services provide attorney assistance in non-criminal, civil matters. Like the state's indigent defense system, however, the various agencies involved in providing civil legal service have seen their financial support dwindle, particularly that provided by the federal government.

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