

USDA CONDUCTS WETLANDS PROGRAM SIGN UP

From U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

■(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.

Instead of the conventional two or three week sign up periods that were scheduled in previous years, the sign up will continue for an indefinite period.

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.

WRP has restored 325,000 acres of high quality wetlands across the nation. The goal for the next six years is to restore an additional 650,000 acres. Oklahoma is in the process of restoring over 12,000 acres of wetlands enrolled in 1995 in the first state WRP sign up.

All programs of the USDA are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or disability.

NICKLES REQUESTS PROBE OF TATUM MURDER

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Oklahoma Senator Don Nickles on Wednesday asked Secretary of State Warren Christopher to work closely with Russian authorities to fully investigate the murder of Oklahoma businessman Paul Tatum.

Tatum was gunned down over the weekend in Moscow.

"All Americans are deeply concerned about this tragic incident and its implications," wrote Nickles. "Mr. Tatum's murder was a deliberate, execution style killing, carried out with no apparent fear of retribution. We in Oklahoma are especially troubled to see one of our neighbors so brutally killed."

Tatum's murder, some believe, may have been linked to his business dealings in the Russian Republic, raising concerns about the safety of other American citizens doing business there. That concern prompted Nickles to also ask Christopher what steps the U.S. government is taking to prevent further such attacks.

"I would also like to know what steps our government is taking to work with the Russian government to prevent further attacks against American businesses and entrepreneurs," Nickles wrote.

"This must be done in order to secure not only the interest of the United States, but also the successful development of Russia's fledgling free-market economy. We need to make every effort to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens and businesses operating in Russia and the former Soviet Union."

Nickles is scheduled to visit Oklahoma City on Friday.

HISTORIC AREA PROMOTES CHISHOLM TRAIL

From Senate Media

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Tri-County Historic Chisholm Trail Commission, an alliance of southern and central Oklahomans living in the vicinity of its namesake late 1800s cattle drive trail, is stepping up efforts to promote the area's economic development through tourism.

Residents of each of the three counties, Jefferson, Stephens and Grady, are active in the Commission's work, with participation open to anyone willing to work for economic growth along the historic trail.

The Chisholm Trail was named after Jesse Chisholm, a Chickasaw Indian trader, who established the route as his trading itinerary. It later became known as a cattle trail. The commission is the brainchild of Oklahoma State Senator Carol Martin, who wants to bring the trail back to its original purpose. "We intend to complete the cycle," she said, "making the historic trail once again an economic trade route."

"It's exciting to see the enthusiasm of ordinary people devoting extraordinary time and effort, without any government funding or official backing, to the future of their region," Martin said in praise of the group.

The Commission's long-term objective is to promote increased tourism as an economic development tool for the area. With the Chisholm Trail as its focus, the program is similar to the Green Country concept used to promote the state's forested eastern sections, but with a thematic rather than regional approach.

After funding is raised by the Tri-County

group, development of a brochure featuring attractions, sites and accommodations along the Trail will be published by the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation.

A Home Page on the Internet is being produced, donated by Chisholm Trail Internet Services, a Duncan, OK firm. Martin said that Tri-County presence on the Internet opens a world wide market for area attractions, referring to international fascination with America's western heritage.

Concrete markers should soon be in place in Jefferson and Stephens counties, placed with the help of Trail historian Bob Klemme of Enid. The markers, donated by Ringling, OK ranch and farm realtor Mike Turner, will be spaced about one mile apart along the actual site of the cattle trail.

Meetings of the commission are usually at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday each month, at the Fuqua Museum, U.S. 81 and Beech in Duncan. Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, Martin said, the November meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. on Nov. 14, at the museum in Duncan.

"There is no occupation concerned with the management of social affairs which belongs either to women or to men, as such . . . and every occupation is open to both."

*Plato
The Republic
ca. 390 B.C.*