

Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program

Class XVII

Scribe Notes

Seminar 10

October 7 - 9, 2015

"Southeastern Oklahoma Agricultural and Industry"

Wednesday October 7

Scribe: Bryan Nichols

Harbin Fish Farm – Spencer Harbin – Wetumka, OK

Harbin Fish Farm began in south central Kansas in 1969 and expanded to Wetumka in 2008. The property in Wetumka has 85 surface acres of water and was built by a previous owner. The ponds are 3-4 feet deep on the shallow end and 7 feet deep on the deep end.

It was originally built to raise catfish for processing in Holdenville. Harbin Fish Farm now raises fish primarily for pond stocking. The majority of their water comes from Wewoka Creek. Each pond on the farm is contained which is good for biosecurity but has negative effects on production. The largest portion of their business (80%) is catfish. They also raise largemouth bass, bluegill, hybrid bluegill, copper nose bluegill, grass carp, flathead minnows, gizzard shad, and tilapia. The target selling size for catfish is 1 pound and the target selling size for bass is 2 pounds.

Fish are transported by truck. They have a semi that holds 5,000 gallons of water. This will hold 12,000 pounds of fish. They can transport catfish at a rate of 3 pounds of fish per gallon of water. Bass and bluegill are transported at a rate of 1 pound of fish per gallon of water. Losses during transport are very low, maybe 1 or 2 dead fish per 12,000 – 15,000.

Feed is sourced mostly from Mississippi with some from Utah. Feeds range from 32-48% protein and 3-18% fat depending on the type of fish being fed. Bluegill and bass eat approximately 1.5% of bodyweight in feed while catfish eat approximately 4.5% of bodyweight in feed.

They have three main predators: river otters, cormorant birds and blue herons.

Their marketing is mainly through word of mouth with a lot of their sales being wholesale.

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture – Poteau, OK

The Kerr Center's Agriculture Division was founded in 1965. The Agriculture Division was restructured into the Center for Sustainable Agriculture in the mid-1980s. The ranch at Poteau is approximately 4,000 acres.

David Redhage spoke to the group about a native pollinator project that they are working on. Among the wildflowers that they have attempted to establish are Maximillion sunflower, Illinois bundleflower, Rattlesnake aster, and Compass plant. They have been working to improve management of pollinator habitat with rotational grazing. One benefit they have seen with restricting access to riparian areas is a decrease in cocklebur problems.

George Kuepper leads the effort on the Cannon Organic Horticulture Plots. There are 6.7 acres of certified organic ground that was established in 2007. Its primary purpose is to demonstrate organic crop production through bio-extensive management. The horticulture area had a growing stand of Bermudagrass when it began. They have used cover crops such as sorghum-Sudan grass to shade out the Bermudagrass and allow establishment of horticulture crops. Their rotation is green fallow, early vegetables, green fallow, late vegetables. They have also begun establishing elderberries. Methods they have used for controlling pests are establishing gamma grass at the end of rows to serve as habitat for predatory beetles. They have also used trap crops such as Hubbard squash to decrease squash bug problems.

Will Lathrop is the cattle manager and has worked at the center since 1986. Most of the soils are low to very low in phosphorus and potassium. They believe that most issues are best addressed through rotational grazing. They generally move cattle every 2-3 days, sometimes daily. They achieve this through polywire fencing and several points where water tanks can be moved and attached quickly to various points in the water line.

Community Service Project – Veterans Center – Talihina, OK

Our community service project occurred at the Talihina Veterans Center. After a tour of the facility, we worked on weeding flower beds and planting flowers and shrubs in the Special Needs Unit flower beds where veterans enjoy being outdoors.

Buffalo Creek Guest Ranch – Dave and Darleen Shaw – Talihina, OK

Dave and Darleen operate multiple businesses in the Talihina area including the guest ranch. Darleen operates Side Saddle Catering and prepared the group an amazing steak dinner. Most of their visitors come for a weekend and travel from the Dallas metroplex, Oklahoma City, or Tulsa. They have also had guests stay from as little as 40 miles away. They did the vast majority of the work on the house themselves over the course of two years.

Thursday October 8

Scribe: Josh Payne

1. Brinkley Auctions (Larry Brinkley)

They started in 1974 selling small equipment at fairgrounds. The business became a full-time business in 2006. It is the largest one-day tractor sale in the US. They sell approximately 400 tractors/month. They also sell on the internet. Tractors are sold internationally. Many are sold to Egypt. Locally, sales are dependent on the cattle market. They have 18 full time employees and 60 employees during sale week. They can sell up to 130 tractors per hour.

2. McCain Poultry Farm (Tommy McCain)

This is a commercial broiler operation. The houses were built between 1987 and 1997. He went into chicken business to use the litter as a fertilizer source. He used to raise 3-4 pound broilers in 38-40 days. Now they grow a 7-8 pound broiler in 53 days. The first 10 days of broiler's life affects the last 10 days of performance. The biggest challenge for growing birds in southeastern Oklahoma is managing humidity. He averages 3% mortality. A big part of this is proper culling. They can control growth rate by controlling light. They can slow growth rate by decreasing light and increase growth rate by increasing light. He windrows litter between flocks. The average income is \$5.18 per pound at a 1.87 feed conversion ratio. There are 1.2 million birds per week processed at the Tyson plant.

3. Weyerhaeuser Overview (Rick Harder)

They own 1.1 million acres in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. They have two conventional mills. North America's largest paper mill is in Valliant, Oklahoma. They grow their own seedlings, do site prep, and plantings. They manage competing vegetation through aerial herbicide or by mechanical

means. Trees are trimmed for tree stand improvement. When they prep the site, they rip the soil. Tree planting is done by hand using immigrant workers. Fertility is conducted using aerial application. They harvest trees in approximately 34 years.

4. Seed Production Facility (Bob Heinemann)

Forests cover 12.5 million acres or 28% of Oklahoma's land area. NIPF make up 95% of Oklahoma's total forested land holdings. A total of 4.5 million acres of the most product timberland lies in the 13 eastern counties. Forestry provides \$1.8 billion in cash receipts. Oklahoma ranks 15th in U.S. timber production. The OSU Forest Resource Center is located in Idabel with 1000 acres under research agreement. About \$500,000 of average annual economic input to the county from the Center. The Center is for research and education and conducts genetic selection research on pine trees. They are now working on second and third generation selections. Traits are evaluated for survival, growth, form, wood quality, and disease resistance.

5. Herron Industries (Pete Herron)

They were established in 1944 when the founder purchased cheap land that no one wanted. They begin with site prep, then planting, aerial herbicide application, first thinning, second thinning, and then final harvest. Trees are planted in January or February. A cutting machine is used for cutting big trees. Skidders move downed trees. Landing is the area where you process trees. The de-limber is the machine that removes limbs. An arm is used to move trees onto a truck. A truck carries 30 tons when full. A 14-inch diameter tree weighs about 1 ton. They receive \$300-500 per load. There are 100-150 trees per acre or 100 tons per acre. They sell to the Valliant mill in spring-time for the best price.

Friday October 9

Scribe: Matt Sandmann

After leaving Idabel on Friday morning, we headed west to Bryan County. Our first stop was at the Kelly Sod Farm. This was an exciting experience to see the diversity of Oklahoma agriculture and a relatively new cash crop. We were able to witness sod being harvested. The sod we saw harvested was shipped to Dallas and already unloaded and dispersed to construction sites by that evening. We learned of the limitations of marketing do to the restrictions of fire ant quarantines.

After the sod farm we went to Griffin Farms. This farm has a 5,000 tree pecan orchard. Truly, this is the ideal orchard. It is located in the Red River bottom of Bryan County, which allows for ideal irrigation from the Red River. The orchard we toured is roughly 8 years old and is geared to be in full production in two years.

We ate lunch at Lake Rosetta Investments LLC and learned about the economic opportunities of conservation easement programs.

After a quick stop at Three Rivers Pecans LLC where several classmates enjoyed samples of fudge and pecan brittle, we dispersed and went home, ready for the next trip.