

SCRIBE NOTES
OALP Class 15, Seminar 7
“State Government, Political Party System, and Oklahoma Water Issues”
April 20 - 22, 2011

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

Dustin Mielke

The Legislative Process – Tommy Thomas, Oklahoma Legislative Consulting Group

Tommy Thomas' background

His father served in the Oklahoma House, Tommy served as a page

- Tommy formerly served as a legislator, now works as a lobbyist
 - Was previously an agriculture teacher and worked in insurance

Elected officials all want to make the state better

- However, they sometimes disagree on the methods
- RE: The clash of ideas: “Democracy should be a noisy process”

Be involved in all facets of politics

- Government needs new ideas, enthusiasm, and intellect
- People need to know what is going on in their government
- Mr. Thomas said you should offer yourself as an elected official

The Oklahoma legislative process

- Legislature convenes the first Monday in February
 - In 1989, legislative session was shortened
 - The longer session allowed for more interaction
 - Now the process is sped up – have to do things faster, spend less time on legislation
 - Legislature cannot convene any earlier than the first Monday in February
- Legislature adjourns the last Friday in May by 5:00 p.m., save for special sessions
- First part of session is committee work – three weeks
 - Bills are introduced into committee
 - This is the best time to kill bills – only have to visit with a small number of people
 - 10-15 committee members per committee
 - Usually around 2300 bills introduced, 1500-1600 come out of committee; this year, 800-850 came out of committee
 - Committee chairs usually allow people to speak at hearings to gather information
 - Committee schedules are posted 24 hours in advance, meeting times are decided at the beginning of session
- Next, bills go to the floor – three weeks
 - This year, taking the title off a bill was more difficult
 - Done to insert needed language at a later date
- What passes goes to the governor

Talking to your legislators

- When Mr. Thomas started serving in the House, 60% of House members were “Country boys or girls.”
 - Now, 61% of House members represent urban Oklahoma
- We have occasions to come to our legislators' world
 - They do not often come to our world
 - They do not always understand rural issues – schools, agriculture sales tax exemptions, etc.

The legislature is currently redistricting

- Required every 10 years, using census data
- Rural Oklahoma will lose 2-3 seats due to population shift

- Metropolitan centers lost population, outlying areas gained

Term limits – currently set to 12 years for the legislature

- Reasons Mr. Thomas does not like term limits:
 - Freshmen legislators come with an unnecessary sense of urgency
 - Shifted the rural balance of power
 - Term limits got rid of well-known elected officials
 - Made agency heads and lobbyists more powerful
 - They have the institutional knowledge no longer present in legislative body

For the first time in state history, republicans control the house, senate, and governor's office

Finding bill information

- House and senate websites have searchable bill information, committee agendas, and schedules
- Can also contact your legislators; ask them to explain their stance and their vote
 - Mr. Thomas' 1017 story – took out ads in the paper looking for input
 - six constituents called out of 30,000; 12 hand-written letters seemed huge
- Legislators do not get much interaction – call them
- Legislators sometimes have more information than you
 - Ask them to explain their vote

Lobbyists

- Are a great source of information
 - Read and stay updated with legislation – have more time to devote to this
 - Can call clients to research a topic
- Need to be honest – do not want to betray trust
- Clients
 - Lobbyists try to take on clients and disclose conflicts of interest with their clients
 - Number of clients
 - Mr. Thomas has eight, some lobbyists have one, most contract lobbyists 3-5
 - Some lobbying firms have 20 clients
- Becoming a lobbyist – need to be hired by someone
 - Corporate lobbyists usually are promoted after spending a long amount of time with a company
 - Former legislators and staff are natural candidates for lobbyists
- Agriculture lobbyists each lunch together every Monday to stay on the same page

2011 Oklahoma legislative session highlights

- Tort reform
 - Passed a hard cap on non-economic damages
- Budget is always a big issue
 - Five big-ticket areas
 - Transportation, corrections, education, human services, and one more
 - 80% of the budget goes to these areas
 - Rest of agencies get what is left

Legislators in the off-season

- In non-campaign years, involved with interim studies

Sen. Eddie Fields, District 10, OALP Class X Alumnus

Sen. Fields does not think the agriculture industry does a good job of promoting agriculture together, rather than a single commodity or product or interest

SB 420

- International exportation of livestock
- Currently have to take stock to Miami, Houston, or other international ports
- Bill's goal is to allow shipping livestock or livestock products internationally from the Oklahoma City airport
- Has big implications in horse trade
- Individual producers would have to arrange flights
- A USDA veterinarian has to inspect any item to be shipped

On switching from the house to the senate

- Atmosphere is every senator for himself; no cliques, but less camaraderie
- Fewer personal jabs and attacks
- Senate is more professional

Federal wild horse contracts

- Feels it could be a good place for reform
- Landowners receiving \$500 per horse per year
- 5- to 10-year contract
 - Landowners get paid for the contract terms, not the actual number of horses kept

Rep. Don Armes, District 63

Agriculture committees

- Works with Sen. Justice on the senate side
- Shared philosophy on agriculture; encounters no problems working together

Budget

- Anticipated budget should come together soon
- Being short money can be easier than having extra money
 - Easier to cut than to find where to put extra
- Education is the largest slice of the state budget
 - Other things will take a back seat
 - Education seeing 2-3% cuts
- Natural resources was previously looking at a 7-10% cut
 - Found other funds to reduce that

Volunteer/Rural fire departments

- May be able to find some money
- Realizes they are strapped for cash – fuel especially when moving equipment
- Finding ways to get any extra funds to departments
 - Wants to avoid administrative costs to maximize amounts departments see

Veterinary board

- 3-year ordeal
- Started with a change to the Veterinary Practices Act
 - Made it a felony for a layperson to practice any acts listed in the veterinary practices act
 - Added into a bill on human dentistry during crunch time late in the session
- Veterinary board tried to shut down REI
 - Then went after teeth floaters – arrested Bobby Griswold
- First removed the felony conviction
 - Passed during the first year
- This year was the third year
 - A deal was negotiated between the veterinary board and other parties
 - Animal husbandry wording was changed

- Allows certain reproductive acts to be performed by non-veterinarians
- Teeth floaters will need to be licensed
- Still have to get reproductive drugs from a veterinarian
- Toughest thing Rep. Armes has dealt with

Rep. Dale DeWitt, District 38, House Majority Leader

Budget and redistricting are his two major responsibilities

Budget

- \$500 million short this year
 - Based off last year's budget
 - Collections are up for this year with gross production the largest gain
- Cuts of 3-8% in different areas
 - Core agencies will be cut less
- Agriculture
 - Legislators are moving money around in natural resources to reach proper funding

Redistricting

- Must re-draw lines every 10 years
- Have seen major population shifts in Oklahoma
 - Growth has been in the suburbs, not metropolitan cores
- A few rural districts will move
 - DeWitt himself has to gain 6,000 people
 - East and west of him have both lost population
 - He will have to move south into northern Logan County
- Redistricting is his greatest challenge this year
- Immigration laws and redistricting
 - Do not have much effect on redistricting
 - Minority districts are protected
 - If a district is 50% minority, the minority percentage cannot be decreased
 - Effectively, must re-draw these districts first

Common education and consolidation

- Does not see mandatory consolidation happening
- Voluntary consolidation can and will happen at will
- Consolidating administration
 - Will not be mandated
 - A fund will be available to help fund voluntary consolidation

Rep. Phil Richardson, District 56

Serving his fourth term

Has a degree in veterinary medicine

Is involved in a farrow-to-wean hog operation with his brother

Feral hogs

- Not worried about disease threat because confinement operations reduce the risk

Environment issues

- Water resources board's completion of the statewide water plan
 - Must now politically address water use and allocation
 - Rep. Richardson did not want to start water legislation this year
 - Wants to get the water plan in place and work with agencies first

- Watershed structures
 - Cooperative agreements are a good way to get participation, not mandates
- Wildlife programs
 - Success story: paddlefish processing facilities
 - State can sell the eggs for a revenue from the fish
 - Eggs can yield \$1500 per fish
 - Good example of a cooperative work, not requirements
 - (Can see pictures of Rep. Richardson fishing on Facebook)

Sen. Ron Justice, District 23

His top issues this year

- Trespass laws and bills
 - Urban areas do not understand the importance of rural property rights
- Eminent Domain
 - Sponsored a bill to specify that land cannot be taken by eminent domain for a wind generation facility – for clarification
- Hog operation setback regulations
 - Should not be able to take away others rights by buying property

Working with legislators

- Explain your concerns in a calm, rational manner
- Decide upon which points you will and will not compromise

Future issues

- Environmental – EPA regulations
- Animal rights
 - If they are coming after one segment of the agriculture industry, they are coming for all

Lunch provided by Jackie Listen, OALP Class IX, McClain Bank

Mike Spradling, Oklahoma Farm Bureau President, OALP Class I

Farm Bureau is more than just insurance:

- It is the state's largest farm organization
- The organization makes a heavy push for farm-related legislation
- Example of activism: SQ 744 defeated after heavy Farm Bureau involvement

Rural issues – needed for rural Oklahoma to stay competitive

- Health Care
- High-speed internet
- Transportation and infrastructure

Members and their involvement make Farm Bureau strong

Monica Wilke, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Executive Director

Oklahoma Farm Bureau as a company

- Has more than 500 employees
- 350 of them are based in the home office in Oklahoma City
- Organization has offices in all 77 Oklahoma counties
- Insurance company has seven district claims offices
- Insurance company was started as a member service for OFB members

Jim Reese, Oklahoma Secretary and Commissioner of Agriculture

Agriculture's impact on Oklahoma

- Agriculture creates \$6 billion of total wealth for our state
 - \$2.2 billion in crops
 - \$6 billion in livestock
- Has a stabilizing effect on Oklahoma's economy
- Creates wealth in our state using our natural resources

People are used to food being "always there"

- We have to produce our food efficiently
- Need to make a connection between ourselves and consumers

Challenges as Secretary of Agriculture

- Working on SB 420
 - He was excited about preparing to import and export animals internationally from the state
 - However, the list of requirements was quite discouraging
 - There will be a long road ahead – "Nobody said it would ever be easy."

Sec. Reese's background

- Farm boy – thought that was all he would ever do
- Studied drafting and design in college; attended OSU for engineering technology
- Went back home to the farm – also spent time working for Conoco as a drafter and designer
 - Was thrust into political service after the local republican party was not able to get his brother to run for the legislature
- Served 15 years in the Oklahoma House
- Served as state FSA director
- Worked as policy advisor for Speaker Bengtson
- Was called upon by Gov. Fallin to serve as Secretary of Agriculture

Connecting with consumers

- As individuals, we need to get involved with non-agriculture groups
- Social media is becoming as important as TV and other media forms
- Non-agriculture based speaking engagements account for 10% of Sec. Reese's engagements
- 21% of all Oklahoma agriculture sales happen in the three panhandle counties
- Questions he received from the Leadership Oklahoma group
 - Why do we pay farmers not to farm?
 - Why don't we just do away with subsidies and let the free market apply?

Made in Oklahoma

- Last year had a \$270,000 budget
- Coalition works independently, but is state-funded

HSUS and animal rights

- Oklahoma Humane Society does not expect HSUS to come to Oklahoma any time soon
 - They are aware of HSUS' reputation, want to keep them away

Need to think positively

Tyler Norvell, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Vice President of Public Policy

Farm Bureau policy development

- Starts with Farm Bureau members
- Members' ideas and policy gives direction to FB staff

Perennial Farm Bureau issues

- Ag sales tax exemption
- OSU Board of Regents constitutionality

2011 Legislative issues

- HB 1044 – Changing agency rules
 - State agencies can pass rules
 - If they are not disapproved by the legislature, they stand
 - Very few rules are disapproved
 - This bill changes agency rules approval process
 - They now must be approved by the legislature if they introduce a fee, have a fiscal impact, or deal with a scope of practice board
- HB 1296
 - Changes annexation rules
 - Requires landowners be notified if annexation of their land is being considered
- HB 1249
 - Requires landowner permission to retrieve animals
- SB 530
 - Fixes the conditions surrounding the Eastern Livestock Commission problem
 - Allows livestock owners to have a secured interest or lien in their livestock until payment for the sale of that livestock clears
- SB 124
 - Eminent domain cannot be used to erect wind turbines
- SB 494
 - Recreational trespass law
 - Previously, any trespass cases had to be tried and convicted by the district attorney for fines to be levied
 - Bill allows law enforcement to issue a ticket for recreational trespass on farming, ranching, and forestry land

Initiative petition

- Farm Bureau members wanted signatures from 15% of each congressional district for an initiative petition to run on the ballot
 - Would have added a geographic requirement to the initiative petition
- Did not make it far in the process

How Tyler approaches legislators on an issue

- It depends on his purpose – is he trying to prevent a problem or fix a problem?
- Gives examples of the issue to the legislator
- If the legislator's stance is questionable, he gets Farm Bureau members involved to contact the legislator
- It is not wise to spend political capital on issues that will easily pass

Group Synthesis and Discussion

Positive group experiences witnessed by Edmond

- Class XV saw a huge change between days one and two of the first seminar
- People are getting outside their comfort zones
- Community service has been a positive experience

Bruce Edwards, Urban Harvest Director, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma

Bruce's background

- Has spent eight years at the Food Bank
- Has a community demonstration garden at the Food Bank

- Can demonstrate community activities to various groups
- Works with 48 active community gardens
 - Everything from a couple beds to Chesapeake's garden
 - Give away plants to community gardens
- Offers low-cost gardening and food production classes to the public
- Food Bank takes in surplus products from local farmers

Food Bank

- Distributed 28 million pounds of food last year
- This year, they are on track to distribute 43 million pounds of food

Urban Farm

- Includes a small orchard – peaches, pears, plums
- Trellis system for blackberries and blueberries
 - Also serves as a beaver block
- Has a teaching garden
 - Produced 10,000 pounds of food last year
- All facilities are organic

Composting

- Donations received by the food bank are sometimes near spoiled – used in composting program
- Uses worms in his composting program
 - Help make composting easy
 - Can feed them garbage, cardboard, other stuff
 - Each worm “box” produces 400 pounds of fertilizer every four months
 - Can use as liquid fertilizer by soaking in water
- Bruce started a group – Red Dirt Earth Builders
 - Help on Saturdays in exchange for composting knowledge
- So far has had a \$30,000 impact for the Food Bank
 - Composted approximately 360,000 pounds of food
- Has a worm barn heated with compost

Rabbits

- Has two rabbits
- Waste is collected to feed the worms
 - Produces better, larger worms

Aquaponics

- Has a 1200 gallon tank, holds 800 Tilapia
 - Has fish of all sizes in the tank
 - Uses tank filter cleanings for worm food
- Tilapia grow to 1.5 pounds in 9-12 months
 - Sells them to Iguana Grill restaurant for \$8 per fish
 - Pays for the aquaponics overhead
 - Delivers uncut fish
- Real money is in the plants produced in the system
 - Receives \$3 - \$4 per head of lettuce last year
- Tilapia have to stay warm
 - Need one gallon of water per fish
 - Tilapia is the second most popular restaurant fish in the world
 - Much of it is produced in China

New experiment with small, square, straw bales

- Currently growing hairy vetch in straw bales

- Has trellises put up and plans to grow tomatoes in the straw bales

Hoop house

- Growing vertically with vertical stackers
- Currently has more than 3,000 strawberries inside
 - Each pot contains six plants, each stacker is seven pots high, each row contains 14 stackers, with five rows total in the hoop house
- Harvesting 30 pounds of strawberries every other day
- Water is brought in from above
 - Onions and strawberries grow in beds below the stacked pots to catch excess water
- Cucumbers will be grown in the summer
 - Will replace the soil before switching

Uses coconut core for soil amendment/substitution

- Consists of ground-up coconut
- Holds moisture better than potting soil

Distributing fresh fruit with the Food Bank

- It is brought directly to a distribution site – not warehoused or stored

Kenneth McDonald, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma

We were really good at labeling and boxing

Thursday, April 21, 2011

Shannon Cunningham

At 8:30am OALP Class XV arrived at TimberLake Farms, Inc., in Arcadia. The group was greeted by Dr. Steve Hull, owner of TimberLake Farms, a full – service alpaca farm. Dr. Hull gave us a brief background, sharing that he was raised in Vermont on a small dairy farm. He later served as a faculty member at Michigan State University in the Veterinary School, where he focused on research and laboratory work. He also shared that as a child, he was involved in showing sheep.

Dr. Hull explained to the class that the philosophy to his operation was to “try to grow good grass” since his operation was a “one man show”. He developed this philosophy based on a dairy farm he had visited in New Zealand, where a husband and wife ran 600 head on their own, so he figured if they could run 600 head, he could run his farm on his own.

Dr. Hull then described the different types of alpacas: Wachua and Suri. Wachua, which were primarily raised by the Incas, produce a crimped fleece, which he stated was great for weaving. He also stated that 85% of alpacas are Wachua. The second type of alpaca, the Suri, produce a fleece that has a lock structure and a luster that is similar to silk, but when woven, does not crease like silk. Dr. Hull also stated that alpacas have been in the United States since the late 1980s. Since that time, some issues have arisen including rickets due to low UV absorption, which has been compensated for by an increase in vitamin D in feeding rations. Circling back around to fleece production, Dr. Hull explained that he prefers dark colors and that alpacas come in about 20 different colors. He was also quick to add that he does not select for color, but rather good disposition, reproductive qualities, and good bone structure.

Dr. Hull mentioned that alpacas are growing in numbers, with the trend lending to an older demographic that is buying alpacas because they are easier to take care of than horses, but still allow use of current facilities and interaction with animals.

Dr. Hull then opened the discussion for questions. The first question asked was regarding the use of AI and embryo transfer in alpacas. Dr. Hull stated that the conception rate is low in alpacas, only 25%, and that the American registry only allows live service. He also stated that embryo transfer will occur, but no one in the United States is currently doing it, but there are several people practicing in foreign countries. On the topic of reproduction, Dr. Hull

stated that alpacas are capable of breeding year round and have a gestation period of approximately 11 months. Dr. Hull currently breeds in both spring and fall, and that a baby alpaca is called a cria.

Another question was asked regarding genetic defects or diseases prevalent in alpacas. Dr. Hull stated extra toes and malformation of the face were some genetic defects known to occur. He also stated that disease is not a high concern, and that the only annual vaccination needed yearly is tetanus.

Additional questions were asked about fleece. Dr. Hull stated the fleece is graded and is worth \$50 per bag and once fully processed, the same fleece is worth approximately \$500. Consequently, 100 pounds of fleece is worth about \$3000. Dr. Hull also mentioned he would like to produce sweaters for retail, but it would take approximately 250 animals to support a shop with 100 sweaters. This led to a discussion regarding the number of alpaca farms in the U.S. – there are approximately 3000-4000 in the national database, with about 45 in Oklahoma, and that Colorado and Ohio are the predominant states.

When asked about HSUS and whether or not animal rights activists were a threat, Dr. Hull responded that he had been attacked by animal rights activists and said, “Make no bones about it, they are a threat.” But he was not scared of them. In his tenure at MSU, he participated in many national debates, but he would not participate in any more debates.

Following these questions, the class was invited to look at the alpacas and interact with them. It should be noted, that if you would like to know what an “alpaca sneeze” feels like, just ask Alisa.

The class then loaded up and traveled about five miles down the road to Crestview Farms, Inc., a certified organic farm, where we were greeted by Susan Graff, owner and operator. Susan explained that her farm was certified organic in 2003. She not only runs a store, where she resells other organic products such as organic eggs, Shooting Star Farms products, and KT Vineyard products, among others. She also sells at the OSU OKC Farmers Market and the Chesapeake Farmers Market, and is involved in the Oklahoma Food Coop.

Susan has a 30x100 greenhouse, a hoop house, and two caterpillars, mentioning that she plans to construct another hoop house with funding from an NRCS grant. When asked what she raises, she said, “A to Z.” She raises lettuces, onions, shallots, tomatoes, squash, beans, cucumbers, cabbage, broccoli, and a plethora of herbs. She also has an orchard where she raises various things from grapes to a variety of fruit trees. She also said she does all the farming and planting herself, and that she uses drip irrigation.

In regard to a question that was asked about excess product, she says that she sells most of her product, and what is not sold, she tries to utilize. Susan also mentioned CSA, community supported agriculture, and she explained that a CSA is a 39 week, pay-in-advance program, where members pay \$25 per week for a bag of various vegetables and fruit.

When asked about how pests are handled, Susan said she uses various oils and insecticidal soaps to help combat pests.

A final question was asked, “What made you want to do this?” Susan’s reply was that she started off growing herbs and that she would sell some in Edmond, and then they were re- sold at a farmers’ market. After that she bought her current property in 1995 and had her first garden in 1996 and now it has simply grown into six or seven gardens. The class then traveled to Blue and Gold Sausage in Jones. Here the group had lunch, which was followed by the long-awaited announcement of where the class would be heading for the international trip – after several minutes of a never-ending game of 20 questions, and seeing the countries’ flags, it was announced that we are going to Ireland and Scotland!!! This, of course, was followed with about 20 minutes of more questions and talk about how great our trip will be.

Following this, Brett Ramsey, co-owner of Blue and Gold Sausage, discussed the history of the company. The company is strictly fundraising. The company was started by necessity to raise funds for the Agriculture chapter at school. The sausage that was created to sell was custom processed.

At Blue and Gold, nothing is ever slaughtered at the plant; the product is simply shipped in and processed. Batches of 400 pounds of sausage are made at one time and a typical shift runs 700 pounds per hour. Once the product is made, it is sold chilled and not frozen. In total, net profit to organizations is approximately \$3.5 million per year.

Following this information session, the class took a tour of the facility. It was also great to have Don Ramsey, Brett's dad, available to answer questions.

After leaving Blue and Gold Sausage, the group headed to the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) in Oklahoma City. The class was welcomed by Jamie Allen, Director of Market Development (member of Class XI) and then was addressed by Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner (member of Class XV). Blayne explained that ODAFF serves in a regulatory capacity and touches virtually everyone in the state. There are 167 programs within ODAFF and the forestry division is the largest.

The class was then addressed by Dr. Mike Talkington, Director of Laboratory Services, and given a tour of the labs at ODAFF, by Tanna Kilpatrick and Paul Kerr. The class saw the Seed Laboratory, Calibration Laboratory, Pesticidal Laboratory, Milk and Milk Products Laboratory, Serology Laboratory, and Feed and Fertilizer Laboratory.

Jamie Allen talked with the class regarding Ag Enhancement and Diversification, Agritourism, Farm to School, the International Division, Made In Oklahoma products, and Farmers Markets.

The class was then addressed by a panel from ODAFF. Kevin Grant, Director of Wildlife Services, explained that Wildlife Services is a non-regulatory division and serves to protect Oklahoma residents from wildlife damage and has been an agency since 1915, when its original purpose was to help manage the wolf population/problems in Oklahoma. Currently, the division helps to protect Oklahoma residents from damage caused by 1) coyotes, 2) beavers, and 3) feral hogs. Next to speak to the class was Kenny Naylor, Supervisor of Environmental Resources. He explained that Oklahoma is one of the largest nursery states in the nation, and he underscored the implications of pesticides, fertilizers, and seed use in the state. He also addressed issues of phosphates and nitrogen in the ground. Jerry Flowers, of Investigative Services, was next to address the class. Captain Flowers explained there are eight field agents in the state and all have arresting power. They investigate issues pertaining to livestock theft, timber theft, wild land arson fires, and equipment theft.

Following the panel discussion, Blayne then completed the tour of ODAFF, including a stop by her office and the Commissioner's office.

The group then departed for Producers Cooperative Oil Mill in Oklahoma City. Brandon Winters, Risk Manager (member of Class XIV), greeted the group. He explained that PCOM is an oilseed processing plant that processes cotton and canola seed. They crush approximately 1200 tons per day. He went on to explain the process of cottonseed processing: cleaning, de-linting, and that the first cut is used for medical supplies and resume and paper for money, whereas the second cut is used for cellulose. The meats are sent to the prep room, flaked, and are then run through the extruder, where they are turned into oily cubes, then sent to a solvent plant where the oil is extracted. He also explained that cotton seed is comprised of about 16% oil and that canola has about 40-42% oil. Canola is cleaned, run through the prep room, flaked, sent to a prepress, then pressed, run through the extruder, and flashed. He went on to explain the benefits of raising canola; it can be rotated every three years to help clean up a wheat field and break the disease cycle.

Matt Gard (member of Class XII) then talked to the group about the success of the addition of canola and "tricks" of no-till canola and making canola work. His remarks were joined by Gene Neuens, Field Services, PCOM, who also talked about the efficacy and benefits of canola. All commented on the new PCOM plant that will begin crushing the 2013 harvest. Following this informational session, the class was given a tour of the plant.

At the conclusion of the tour, the class headed to Cattlemen's Steakhouse in the Stockyards for dinner, compliments of PCOM. During dinner it was a great time to fellowship and relax after a long day that was filled with interesting and beneficial information about Oklahoma agriculture.

Friday, April 22, 2011
Orlin Nichols Jr.

Jeri Fleming, Project Manager with the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute, gave us an overview of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Interim Draft Plan. The 5-year plan started in 2007 in Beaver County. They focused on public involvement with 42 local input meetings and workshops across the state. There were 11 regional meetings which developed recommendations submitted to the water board. The outline was a planning process consisting of policy and technical work. The policy was an interim draft plan that included a state-wide water assessment, water management and policy, 13 watershed planning regions, and 82 water basins with information on stream flow to provide regional and state-wide opportunities and solutions for water providers. There were 79 total recommendations with 17 recognized including green projects, Hydrologic Studies, In-stream/Environmental Flows, Interstate Water Issues, Local and Statewide Water Planning, Regionalization of Water Supply Systems, Reservoir Maintenance and Development, State-Tribal Water Issues, Surface/Groundwater Interaction, Water Conservation, Water Education, Water Emergency/Drought Planning, and Water Quality/Quantity Monitoring. The technical work was feedback and implementation meetings. These community-friendly meetings were held in the 13 planning regions to collect feedback, generate ideas for implementation, provide input on priority of implementation, and answer questions. Finally, reports were available on feedback received, a final draft water plan was presented to the board, time was given for additional public comment, the plan was presented to the board one last time, and then it was presented to the legislature.

The 2012 Comprehensive Water Plan was given by Kyle Arthur, Director of Planning at the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB). In 1980, the first official statewide water plan was project oriented meaning we wanted to build things. We looked at moving water from east to west to terminal water storages with little success. In 1995, we had our first water plan update that was policy oriented and was better received. There are six goals for the 2012 Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan (OCWP): characterize demands, identify reliable supplies for forecasted demands, perform technical studies, engage comprehensive stakeholder involvement, ensure water resources management programs, and make "implementable" recommendations. These goals distinguish the difference between a good plan and the right plan. A robust public participation and expert technical evaluations equal a reliable water supply that includes water rights, available "wet" water, infrastructure, and water quality. Our two biggest users of water are public water supply which is the second largest at 2.3 million acre-feet permitted per year and agriculture being the largest at 3.0 million acre-feet per year permitted for irrigation. The OCWP has collected technical data that will be indispensable to water providers, policy makers, and water users including but not limited to projection demand through 2060, characterization of surface and ground water supplies, hydrologic variability, reliability of supplies, gaps between supply and demand, and supply solutions. OCWP has stated that throughout the collaborative water plan process, they are discovering exactly how Oklahoma citizens wish to manage their water resources. Watershed planning region reports give potential reservoir site viability. There have been 68 sites that have been identified statewide that have significant data to be considered as viable candidates for development. Supplemental studies and work group reports cover issues such as climate, agriculture water, tribal water, water quality, in-stream flow, drinking water infrastructure needs, marginal quality water, artificial aquifer recharge, potential reservoir viability, and water transfer and conveyance.

Jeri Fleming gave a second presentation on water laws and rights. There are two types of water: ground and surface water. "Groundwater" means fresh water under the surface of the earth regardless of the geologic structure in which it is standing or moving outside the cut bank of any definite stream with two types of aquifers, bedrock and alluvial. Surface water is defined as any water above ground. Diffused surface water is created by sheet flow, rain, snowmelt, or flood and can be captured and owned by an individual. Domestic use is not subject to regulation, for household purposes, and for normal grazing capacities and also for irrigation not to exceed three acres for gardens, orchards, and lawns. Water cannot be wasted by depletion or pollution. Non-domestic use requires an application for a permit to use water with a location of wells and the amount of water to be taken with the proposed use of the water. Application for a permit requires a filed notice to be published in a local newspaper that must run for two consecutive weeks. Proof of notification must be submitted to the OWRB and notification by certified mail must be given to land owners within ¼ mile of the well. OWRB may hold a hearing on the application to determine beneficial use, agriculture, municipal, hydroelectric power, navigation, or recreation.

Neil McCaleb with the Chickasaw Nation stated that there will be no permits issued; they will sue the state instead. Treaties of tribal sovereignty are from the past, some people say, but the tribes say that is not so. In the Dancing

Rabbit Treaty of 1830, Indians were given land with all the rights, mineral and water, and 170 years later it is still a binding contract. There were 4,000 Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians with no representation along with 40,000 whites for state hood. The land was taken but the water never was taken. The water department continues to use the water as they see fit until the courts decide differently. The tribes only want three things for the water: 1.) they want the state to acknowledge they have an interest and want to negotiate use and allocate, but with no progress, 2.) they want to ensure no water is taken out of basins until determined it will not negatively impact the basins, and 3.) if any water transfers, they want to determine the need with economic and environmental impacts to be litigated. Tribal rights have never been recognized and the tribes want to negotiate.

Dr. Robert P. Smith, Independent Water Resources Consultant for the Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD), stated that Oklahoma has 36 million acre-feet of water that runs out of the state every year called gulf water, meaning the water is destined to reach the Gulf of Mexico. They are interested in surface water only and want less than 7% of the Gulf water. Oklahoma currently uses 1.1 million acre-feet of this water per year and OWRB has 2.6 million permitted. TRWD wants to buy 0.46 million acre-feet per year. They feel this would be a win-win situation for Oklahoma and Texas, given the population of Oklahoma City metro is 1.2 million people and continues to grow at a rate well above the national average and the DFW metro has a population of 6.5 million and is the 4th largest metroplex economy in the U.S. with the fastest growth rate. TRWD states that Oklahoma has ten times the water needed to support the state. The projected need for TRWD in 2050 is 1.4 million acre-feet per year. Oklahoma also has an additional 160 million acre-feet of available groundwater for use.

An open discussion was held with the speakers which was very informative.