

National Land & Range Judging Contest

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

NEWS RELEASE

Sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oklahoma Farm Credit, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Farm Credit, Oklahoma Farmers Union, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, State Conservation Associations and Agriculture Groups across the nation.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2008 Land Judging Contest Winners Honored

First Place Results Noted

Oklahoma City — Over 170 teams of teenage FFA and 4-H members competed in the 57th annual National Land and Range Judging Contest, held May 5-7, according to contest cochairman Scotty Herriman, of South Coffeyville, Okla. Herriman is president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, the contest's principal sponsor. "We had about 170 teams from 35 states competing this year, including Hawaii," Herriman said.

Herriman notes the idea of a land judging contest was invented by three Oklahoma conservationists in 1942. They decided which soil qualities could be judged and developed score cards to test skills. The idea caught on and Oklahoma City has been hosting the national contest since 1952.

The 4-H and FFA participating teams qualified for the national event by placing among the top five teams at contests held in their home states. Herriman said the teams match skills in judging the adaptability of land for various purposes including farming, range management, and homesite construction. An adult category is provided to allow coaches, team alternates and others interested in soil to compete.

"The contestants take turns examining the soil in pits and trenches dug especially for the contest," Herriman said. He noted that the skills the teens test at the contest involve principles that can be valuable in career fields like environmental and agricultural management, natural resource conservation, home building and construction.

The actual contest site remains a secret until contest day, so no one has an unfair advantage. Contestants and coaches gather on contest morning to find out the official contest location. They then travel to the site, with a police escort, in a caravan of over 100 cars spanning several miles. This year the Concho Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency near El Reno hosted the contest on May 7.

The event ended Wednesday night with an awards banquet in the Great Hall of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum when the day's freshly-tabulated results were announced. Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins gave the keynote address before the awards presentation began. National championship trophies were awarded to team and individual

winners in each category of competition including land judging, range judging, and homesite evaluation. Each category included FFA and 4-H.

In Land Judging, FFA competition, the Pleasant Hope, Mo., chapter, won in the team category and the first place individual winner was Emily Cashman, Montezuma, Ind. In the 4-H competition the Medina County, Hondo, Texas, chapter, was the winning team, and Dustin Lillie of that team was the individual winner.

In the Range Judging Contest, the Gans, Okla., chapter won the FFA team competition, and Daniel Merrill of that team took the first place individual FFA award. The Butte, Newell, S.D., chapter won the 4-H team category, and Sammi Shaykett of that team, placed first in the individual category.

In Homesite Evaluation, the Oklahoma Union, South Coffeyville, Okla., chapter won the FFA team competition, and Justin Van Brundt, New Orleans, Ind., took the first place individual FFA award. The Hamilton Southeastern, Denver, Ind., chapter won the 4-H team category, and Chelbey Welchel, Fisher, Ind., placed first in the individual category.

Contest cochairman Scotty Herriman, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, presented the 2008 National Land and Range Judging Contest Honoree Award to Carolyn Tucker and Fredia Rice. Carolyn Tucker, Hinton, Okla., served as secretary at the North Caddo Conservation District for 35 years until her retirement in 2006. She continues to volunteer to help with registration at the Land and Range Judging Contest as she has for more than 20 years. Fredia Rice, Duncan, Okla., is the secretary at the Cotton County Conservation District and has helped with the contest for almost 20 years.

Herriman credits the OACD Auxiliary, conservation district employees association and Oklahoma conservation districts for helping make the contest a success.

"I would like to thank all the conservation districts, businesses and associations who sponsored this educational contest," Herriman said. "It takes a tremendous amount of time, effort and money to put on an annual event like this."

"Special thanks goes to the Concho Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency for hosting the contest sites," Herriman said, "Thanks also to the Noble Foundation for sponsoring the printed program and the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum for hosting the awards banquet, along with many other sponsors."

Herriman said the Auxiliary of the National Association of Conservation Districts sponsored the Social Hour and Dance this year, hosted by the OACD Auxiliary. Members of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Employees assist with the very vital contest tabulating, which takes place in the few hours between the end of the contest and the beginning of the awards banquet.

In addition to the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, contest cosponsors also include the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma Farm Credit, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Department of

Career and Technology Education, Oklahoma Farmers Union, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and numerous other businesses and organizations.

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