

CONGRESSIONAL FORUM



Rep. Mary Fallin



Rep. Dan Boren

OFB leaders urged to attend forum on federal truck weight limits

Oklahoma's 5th District Congresswoman Mary Fallin will hold a Congressional Forum on truck weight issues affecting farmers and ranchers at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 21 in the Blue Room of the Oklahoma State Capitol.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is calling upon its leaders to attend the forum to lend the farm and ranch voice to concerns about truck weight limits, which affect the way they do business both within and across state lines.

Rep. Fallin and fellow Oklahoma Congressman Dan Boren, who also will be in attendance, are leading the way in truck weight reform by authoring H.R. 3098, a bill to redefine the definition of a commercial motor carrier from 10,001 lbs to 26,001 lbs. Reps. Tom Cole, Frank Lucas, and John Sullivan are cosponsors of the legislation, which would improve federal trucking regulations.

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe has introduced S. 3271, similar legislation in the Senate. Sen. Tom Coburn has signed on to cosponsor this legislation.

The entire Oklahoma Congressional Delegation has been invited to attend.

Tour confirms drought statistics

By Sam Knipp,
OFB Vice President of Communications

It sits just east of lonely, a few miles from despair and smack in the middle of no man's land! You won't find it with any GPS gadget. To locate the worse drought in the Oklahoma Panhandle's history, simply read the latest stats from the Oklahoma Climatological Survey. And then, go there.

That's what a group of Farm Bureau leaders did Aug. 4 when they toured Cimarron County, listed on everybody's map as suffering from the driest period on record. From August 2007 to August 2008, the Panhandle has received 11.22 inches of precipitation. That's 53 percent of normal. Step into the far western tip of the Panhandle near Boise City, and the rain gauge has been a lonely dude this year. Less than 5 inches has visited in 2008. It is hard, if not impossible, to produce much food with numbers like that.

"It is a true disaster for our part of the world out here," said Larry Crews. He farms south of Boise City and is president of the

(See *Tour confirms*, page 4)



Powder dry soil sifts through Dallas Fry's hands in a pasture north of Boise City. Fry farms near Keyes and helped coordinate a drought tour for OFB leaders and politicians.

Oklahoma hay directory is still current for buyers, sellers

Both hay buyers and sellers are reminded that the online hay directory maintained by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry is available.

The hay directory is online at www.oda.state.ok.us, and the hay hotline is still open at 1-800-580-6543. For more information, contact Glen Schickedanz, Market News Coordinator with ODAFF, through the hay hotline or by email at glen.shcikedanz@oda.state.ok.us.

Kay County's Don Schieber joins U.S. Wheat Associates' officer team

Kay County Farm Bureau member Don Schieber of Ponca City now holds an office on the U.S. Wheat Associates Board. Schieber will serve as secretary-treasurer.

U.S. Wheat Associates is the wheat industry's export market development organization, funded by America's wheat producers and through cost-share funding provided by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

On the Road with Ag in the Classroom



LEFT – Teachers enjoyed wine tasting on a stop at Summerside Winery in Vinita during a recent “On the Road with Ag in the Classroom” tour across northeastern Oklahoma. The tour, specifically set up for Tulsa area teachers, was sponsored by the Tulsa County Farm Bureau.

RIGHT – Tulsa County Farm Bureau leaders visited with Oklahoma Ag Secretary Terry Peach, right, during lunch at Star Lake Cattle Ranch in Skiatook. From left, are Helen and Melvin Keller, Paul Hayes, Wayne Herriman and Peach. The tour was held July 29-30.



Offshore drilling order is lifted by president

President Bush recently lifted the executive moratorium on offshore oil drilling that has been in effect since 1990. The move by Bush puts pressure on Congress to lift its ban on offshore drilling. The White House has been urging Congress to lift its ban to boost domestic oil supplies.

According to a Washington Post article, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates there are “undiscovered conventionally recoverable resources” of 17.8 billion barrels of oil in the United States. In addition, the Post notes that a recent Gallup poll indicates 57 percent of Americans surveyed said they were willing to allow drilling in coastal and wilderness areas where drilling is currently off limits, provided doing so had the potential to reduce high gas prices.

Farm Bureau continues to press Congress to lift its ban on offshore oil drilling.



WATER RESEARCH – Water Research Advisory Board (WRAB) members Marla Peak (sitting), Oklahoma Farm Bureau Regulatory Affairs and Legal Foundation director, and Cheryl McClellan (left) prioritized issues for updating the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan under the direction of Mike Langston (right) and Valerie Fleming, both employees of the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute. Phase two of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan is underway with 11 regional meetings being held across the state over the next several months.

USDA announces help for drought-stricken counties

Producers in counties approved for emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land because of drought will have rental payments cut by 10 percent instead of the standard 25 percent, the Agriculture Department announced recently. Oklahoma's Cimarron County is included in the list.

To be approved for emergency haying or grazing, a county must be listed as a level "D3 Drought -Extreme" or greater, or have suffered at least a 40 percent loss of normal moisture and forage for the preceding four-month qualifying period.

Cimarron County is experiencing the worst droughts in its history.

More information on emergency haying and grazing is available at local FSA offices and online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

EPA denies bid to relax renewable fuels standard

The Environmental Protection Agency has denied a bid to relax the federal standard for renewable fuels in the U.S. gasoline supply for 2008 and 2009, asserting that the mandate for more ethanol in gasoline has not had a major effect on food prices.

EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson said the agency has found that the renewable fuels standard (RFS), which requires 9 billion gallons of ethanol or other renewable fuels in the nation's fuel supply in 2008 and 11.1 billion gallons in 2009, is "not causing severe economic harm," which is one of the criteria for a waiver under the Clean Air Act. At the same time, he said, the mandate is strengthening U.S. energy security. Texas Gov. Rick Perry had requested a waiver of the renewable fuels standard.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman said the EPA decision sends a positive signal regarding the substantial benefits of renewable fuels. "We're pleased that the EPA did not turn its back on the promise of renewable fuels," Stallman said.

Perry requested a 50-percent waiver of the national volume requirement for the RFS. Implementation of the RFS will continue as legislated in the Energy Policy Act of 2007, according to the EPA.

Studies by Texas A&M University and Purdue University show the requested waiver would have little impact on feed and food prices. The Purdue study tied most of the recent spike in corn prices to higher oil prices, which in turn had caused the demand for ethanol and corn to jump.

August Area Meetings

RIGHT – Jim Mayer, Guymon, studied the policy development book during District One's Area Meeting August 4 in Guymon.



LEFT – OFB District 1 Director Ervin Mitchell welcomed leaders to the district's meeting in Woodward August 5.

RIGHT – Craig Co. FBW Chair Marilyn Spence reported on Women's activities during the District 6 Area Meeting in Vinita Aug. 7.



LEFT – Muskogee Co. President Jon Leeds, left, visited with Adair Co. Vice President Jack Simmons during the District 6 Area Meeting in Muskogee Aug. 7.

RIGHT – District 7 Farm Bureau leaders, from left, Ralph Meade, Gary Johnson, Ron Robinson and Dean Hedges caught up with each other during the district's Area Meeting Aug. 7 in Enid.



Published by Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Postmaster: Send address corrections to:
Perspective, P.O. B. 53332, OKC, OK 73152-3332

STAFF DIRECTORY

Traci Morgan, 523-2346
Perspective/Online News Editor

Sam Knipp, 523-2347
Vice President of Communications/IPR

Lori Kromer Peterson, 523-2539
Vice President of Public Policy

Marla Peek, 523-2437
Director of Regulatory Affairs

Ericka McPherson, 530-2668
Director of National Affairs

Tyler Norvell, 523-2402
Legislative Specialist, State Affairs

Oklahoma Farm Bureau
2501 N. Stiles
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3126

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 131
Okla. City, OK.

Tour confirms drought statistics...

(continued from page 1)

Cimarron County Farm Bureau. "I'm concerned about the lack of production, both from our crops and our pastures."

Crews loaded OFB President Mike Spradling into his dusty Ford and showed him the scariest sight to greet any rancher – grass at death's doorstep.

"The grass just crackles and pops as you walk across the pasture," Spradling noted as they examined a pasture north of Boise City in the Cimarron River Valley. "This is really sad."

In the lead vehicle on the tour is Stephen Vaughan, farm loan officer for the Cimarron County Farm Service Agency Office. He tells the group if it started raining today, some of this land will not recover this year.

"We're looking at two to three years before the grass roots can recover," Vaughan says.

One large pasture near the Texas-Oklahoma line sat with a sprinkler irrigation system baking in the sun. After pouring nine inches of water



on the grass, with no results, the owner gave up.

"That pasture needs rain," Crews says. "There is no substitute for rain. You can't make up for what Mother Nature should be providing."

The tour dusted by the old Coble Farm southwest of Boise City. It was captured by a photographer during the Dust Bowl days. This is the famous picture of the father leading his two

Getting an up close and personal look at the devastating drought conditions in Cimarron County were, from left, Larry Crews (crouching), Cimarron County Farm Bureau president; Matt Ball, field representative for U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn; Mike Spradling, Oklahoma Farm Bureau president; Gus Blackwell, Oklahoma District 61 Representative and Speaker Pro Tempore; Stephen Vaughan, farm loan officer for the Cimarron County FSA Office; and Dallas Fry, Cimarron County Farm Bureau vice president.

sons, heads bent into wind, their home barely visible in the drifting dirt and sand. Today, despite even drier conditions, grass covers the area.

"Erosion and blowing dirt is not happening today because of the modern conservation tillage methods and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)," says Iris Imler, district programs coordinator for the Cimarron County Conservation District.

But a worry wrinkle moves across the forehead of Vaughan and others as they contemplate what could happen if rains don't soon drench the area.

"I'm very concerned," Vaughan says. "If we don't get rain this growing season, those fields will eventually start blowing."

"If there is no moisture to seed the fall wheat crop, this county could be in real trouble," echoes Crews. "That's why we stopped tilling the soil and sprayed chemicals to control the weeds."

But the Cimarron County farmer is not giving in to despair. In fact, he is preparing to plant wheat in September.

"I'm an optimist," Crews says. "I think the resilience of Mother Nature is dramatic. We just need the rain. Every day we get closer to a good rain."



LUNCHEON – Jonita Williams, Muskogee Main Street Program Director, spoke about "Whistlestop Campaigns" during the Muskogee County Farm Bureau Women's Rural/Urban Luncheon Aug. 7 at the Three Rivers Museum in Muskogee. Also pictured are, from right, Lois Murr, Beverly Delmedico and Billie Seward.

Muskogee County FBW Luncheon