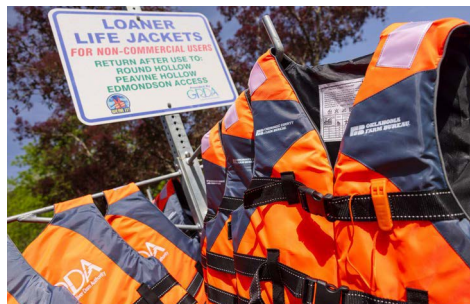


# PERSPECTIVE

May 30, 2025



## Farm Bureau, GRDA team up to provide life jackets for Illinois River float season

**O**klahoma Farm Bureau, Cherokee County Farm Bureau and the Grand River Dam Authority recently purchased more than 200 life jackets for the public to use free of charge during the 2025 recreation season on the Illinois River.

The coalition, along with the Tahlequah Area Chamber of Commerce, worked to update the loaner jacket program along the popular Illinois River corridor in Cherokee County to provide the quality flotation devices to help prevent accidental drownings as the summer recreation season begins.

The life jackets were delivered to

the GRDA Scenic Rivers Operations headquarters near Tahlequah Thursday, May 15, with representatives from Cherokee County Farm Bureau, GRDA and the Tahlequah Area Chamber of Commerce on hand to unload the safety equipment and begin the process of distributing the loaner life jackets at stations along the river.

"We are excited every season to see so many people come out and float the Illinois River," said Jared Skaggs, supervisor of scenic rivers and public access areas for GRDA. "It's a really popular destination, and we're happy

to see so many families come out and friends come out. Ultimately, our top priority is to make sure people are safe on the river."

The new jackets are trimmed in bright orange to improve visibility on the river and are sized to ensure outdoor recreationists of all sizes have a life jacket that fits properly. A whistle is attached to each jacket in case of an emergency situation, and the jackets are each adorned with Farm Bureau and GRDA logos.

***Continued on next page...***



## Life jacket donation *(continued from front)*

The life jackets will be made available at six different loaner stations along the Illinois River corridor near Tahlequah for river users who either do not have a life jacket of their own or may have forgotten a life jacket. The jackets are intended for day use by the public and can be returned to any station along the river after use.

“We’re proud of this partnership, and it was a need we could fill,” said Kelly Campbell, Cherokee County Farm

Bureau board member. “I want people to understand – because I’ve personally lost someone on the river – that it is not like checking in at an amusement park. I want people to come here and enjoy the river and not take home a sad story like so many of us know.”

Skaggs said that 80% of drownings occur when life jackets are not worn and that wearing a life jacket while out on the water is a simple way to stay safe during the summer outdoor recreation

season. He said Oklahoma state law requires children who are 12 years old or younger to wear a life jacket while on the water, and adults must each have access to a life jacket while on the water.

“For us to have a loaner program to help facilitate life jacket awareness is fantastic,” Skaggs said. “Having a life jacket available is really the best way we can make sure that when people bring their families to the river that they’re able to go home at the end of the day.”



## OKFB to host YF&R summer conference for young agriculturalists July 25-27 in Sulphur area

**O**klahoma Farm Bureau’s Young Farmers & Ranchers committee invites young Farm Bureau members ages 18-35 and Collegiate Farm Bureau members to the 2025 YF&R Summer Conference July 25-27 in Sulphur.

The conference features seminars, tours and fellowship events to help expand young agriculturalists’ understanding of Oklahoma agriculture while building relationships that will last a lifetime.

The event will begin the evening of Friday, July 25, at the Southern Oklahoma Livestock Auction in Ada. Saturday, July 26, will feature seminars,

tours of southern Oklahoma agriculture facilities and fellowship events. Sunday, July 27, will include a vespers service and OKFB organizational updates, including an overview of the 2025 Oklahoma legislative session. The event will adjourn by noon on Sunday.

Registration for the event opens June 2 and closes July 9. The online registration form is available on the OKFB website at

**[okfb.news/yfrsummer25](https://okfb.news/yfrsummer25).**

The cost of the conference is \$50 for an individual Farm Bureau member or Farm Bureau member family. Collegiate Farm Bureau members can attend for free.

Conference and hotel accommodations will be at the Artesian hotel in Sulphur, and the room cost is included in the conference registration fee.

After registering online, OKFB members can mail a check for the conference registration fee to confirm their registration. Collegiate Farm Bureau members are not required to pay a registration fee to attend.

For questions about the 2025 YF&R Summer Conference Contact Burton Harmon at

**(405) 523-2300.**

Register online by July 9 at,  
**[okfb.news/yfrsummer25](https://okfb.news/yfrsummer25).**

## Payne, Pottawatomie County Farm Bureaus meet with legislators at the State Capitol



Payne County Farm Bureau

County Farm Bureau Capitol visits were winding down in the final days of May as the 2025 Oklahoma legislative session approached its final day, and Oklahoma Farm Bureau hosted Payne and Pottawatomie County Farm Bureaus for legislative visits with their elected officials the week of May 19.

Payne County Farm Bureau members traveled to the state Capitol Tuesday, May 20, and the group of grassroots leaders had the opportunity to sit in the House of Representatives gallery as representatives kicked off floor work for the day.

Payne County Farm Bureau members met with Rep. Ty Burns, Rep. Molly Jenkins, Rep. Trish Ranson, Rep. Jim Shaw and Sen. Randy Grellner as they



Pottawatomie County Farm Bureau

discussed OKFB's priority bills that were working their way through to legislative process to the Governor's desk.

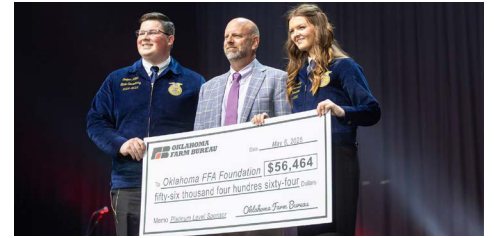
Pottawatomie County Farm Bureau members started their visit on Wednesday, May 21, by observing the Oklahoma Senate in the Senate gallery as members of the chamber debated and voted on legislation.

Pottawatomie County Farm Bureau members discussed issues and opportunities facing Oklahoma agriculture with Sen. Grant Green, Sen. Shane Jett and Rep. Dell Kerbs.

With the final day of the Oklahoma legislative session slated for Friday, May 30, OKFB thanks all county Farm Bureau members who took time to visit the state Capitol to advocate for OKFB policy.

## OKFB connects with FFA members during 2025 Oklahoma FFA Convention in Tulsa

During the 2025 Oklahoma FFA Convention in Tulsa May 6-7, OKFB presented the organization's platinum-level sponsorship and hosted a career fair booth connecting FFA members with OKFB youth programs and scholarships.



OKFB Executive Director Thad Doye (center) presented OKFB's platinum-level sponsorship during the Tuesday general session of the 2025 Oklahoma FFA Convention in Tulsa.



FFA members received their Hunger Challenge certificates at the OKFB career fair booth for their participation in donating animals and funds to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma.

## AFBF issues statement regarding the May 22 MAHA Commission report

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall commented Thursday, May 22, on a White House report issued by the Make America Healthy Again Commission.

The MAHA Commission, led by U.S. Health and Human Services Sec. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., published a report on what it says are four leading drivers of childhood chronic disease.

"It is deeply troubling for the White House to endorse a report that sows seeds of doubt and fear about our food system and farming practices, then attempts to celebrate farmers and the critical role they play in producing the safest food supply in the world," Duvall said in his statement.

"Farmers are identified as 'critical

partners,' yet were excluded from development of the report, despite many requests for a seat at the table. The report also expresses a desire to ensure farmers continue to thrive, but undermining confidence in our food system directly contradicts that noble goal. The report spotlights outlier studies and presents unproven theories that feed a false narrative, and only then does it acknowledge a mountain of evidence about the safety of our food system.

"We suspect USDA had a prominent role in the report's recognition that farmers are the critical first step in the food system, but as a whole, the report falls short. The American people were promised transparency yet presented

with a report developed in secret.

"As a farmer myself, I can confidently say that farmers and ranchers share the goal of improving health outcomes in America. They're dedicated to continuous improvement, guided by sound science and technological advances.

"We are carefully examining the nearly 70 pages of contradictory assertions and look forward to further discussions with administration officials. President Trump has voiced his trust in farmers many times and we urge him to ensure a transparent process going forward with farmers at the table and sound science – not emotionally charged rhetoric – guiding the conversation."



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## OKFB business accelerators program honored by Oklahoma Venture Forum with Economic Impact Award for rural development efforts

**T**he Oklahoma Farm Bureau Grassroots Rural & Ag Business Accelerators program was recently recognized by the Oklahoma Venture Forum with the forum's 2025 Economic Impact Award.

The award, sponsored by the Chickasaw Nation, recognized OKFB for "significant contributions to the state's economy," and was presented Thursday, May 15, during the OVF Awards Luncheon in Oklahoma City.

The OKFB accelerators program is a collaborative rural development effort between OKFB and state and national partners. The program creates economic opportunities for rural Oklahomans and supports Oklahoma agriculture through innovation and business development for rural entrepreneurs.

Additional awards were presented to ventures and innovators who created groundbreaking solutions or innovations or who are positioned to achieve transformative growth, including an overall venture of the year and a most promising new venture award. During the awards ceremony, honorees and attendees heard from Jeffrey Seymour, President & CEO of OKC Innovation District.

The Oklahoma Venture Forum supports entrepreneurs and investors through networking, education, and advocacy, fostering a thriving business community in Oklahoma. The

forum's awards program celebrates the state's most visionary companies, recognizing achievements in innovation, market potential, and economic impact.



**(Left to right)** Oklahoma Venture Forum Executive Committee Member Gina Bertoletti of Moore Norman Technology Center presents the OKFB economic development team of Amarie Bartel, Sadie Heap and Sidany Hilburn with the 2025 Economic Impact Award from OVF Thursday, May 15, during the OVF awards luncheon in Oklahoma City.