

Spring Creek Watershed Landowners Summer 2018 Newsletter



Est. 1994

THE MOST PRISTINE
LARGE OZARK STREAM
IN OKLAHOMA
MANAGED AND
PROTECTED BY
PRIVATE
LANDOWNERS

Phone: (918) 906-6762

Email info@springcreekok.org

www.springcreekok.org

Efforts Stop Poultry Farm Construction on Spring Creek

More Work Needed

"...I stand amazed by the synergy of what your efforts have achieved for the Oaks Community/ Spring Creek... a huge success. Preservation of scenic rivers (or, for that matter, all of our outstanding water resources) is a cause that has no end point. There is no point at which we may say our work is finished. CONGRATULATIONS!!!"

Ed Fite, Vice-President, Scenic Rivers & Water Quality, GRDA

Many of our readers have been actively involved in the successful efforts of the Spring Creek and Oaks community to stop the construction of six poultry houses 100 yards from Spring Creek and right next door to the town of Oaks and Cherokee Nation Trail of Tears historical sites. For those of you who may know little about what took place, here is the story, in brief.

Starting in April, residents of the Oaks community learned that land on a recently sold ranch was being cleared for six chicken houses just west and south of town.

"Mike and I drove by the site and noticed bulldozers," says Emily Oakley of organic Three Springs Farm just downstream. "At first, we didn't think anything of it. Then a neighbor informed us that chicken houses were going to be built. We were still skeptical. We didn't think they could be built next to a High Quality Water such as Spring Creek."

As Emily and others delved into this issue, we were shocked to learn that there is no state authority regulating where poultry houses can be built. As long as an applicant files a "best management" plan that addresses potential runoff and proper storage and handling of manure and

pays a \$10 fee, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) will issue a permit.

Yet as Emily noted in a May 12th letter to poultry integrator Simmons Foods, the loca-



Photo by Alex Mosoiu.

tion for this new facility raised some serious concerns. "The proposed site in Oaks falls within the city limits and is several hundred feet from a designated High Quality Water creek in a Nutrient Limited Watershed. The property in question is several hundred feet from the Oaks Public Schools, borders the Oaks Indian Mission (a faith-based residential facility for Native American youth), abuts a historic and still used cemetery from the end of the Trail of Tears, abuts the historic and sacred New Springplace spring, is three miles upstream of the Cherokee National Park at Rocky Ford along Spring Creek, and is within 1/4 mile of the Oaks church. In addition to the residents of Oaks and children at the mission and school, this creek is loved by the hundreds of residents who live along its 34-mile course and the many families in Tulsa and elsewhere who own land along the creek."

Emily sent a newsletter to members of her Community Supported Agriculture group which was forwarded to Pam Kingfisher of

Mission: to unite as citizens and actively engage in the preservation of the Spring Creek Watershed

Please contact SCC to be removed from or added to this mailing list

**Spring Creek Coalition
2434 East 56 Place
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105**

Poultry Farms

Shining Waters Consultants. “And that’s when the train left the station…” notes Emily. Pam did an amazing job of mobilizing people. She created a Facebook page called Spring Creek Guardians which soon had over 200 members. The Oaks Town Clerk had notified Beth Rooney, president of Spring Creek Coalition (SCC), and SCC joined the effort.



Photo by Pam Kingfisher.

Emily was able to secure the services of David Page, one of three attorneys who worked on the Illinois River lawsuit against poultry companies. On May 18, Mr. Page contacted Tran Tran, LLC, owners of the 60 acre site, asking them to cease construction within five days or a lawsuit on behalf of the community would be filed. On Wednesday, May 23rd, Tran Tran LCC's attorney notified Mr. Page that they intended to stop site preparation and put the property up for sale. Soon after, we could see that the bulldozer had indeed leveled the mounds that had been prepared for the poultry houses.

As of the publication of this newsletter, the Cherokee Nation is negotiating with Tran Tran LLC to purchase the property. We are thrilled with this result.

Emily Hyde

Despite this victory, there is more to do. We feel Oklahoma’s regulations should be changed. Poultry houses will continue to be built. But not every location is a good location. People have a right to be informed when these houses are going to be sited near them. And they should have the right to protest, **before** permits are issued.

As Ed Fite said at the start of this memo, when it comes to our outstanding water resources, unfortunately, “There is no point at which we may say our work is finished.”

Read more! Two excellent articles appeared in the news. For those who receive this newsletter electronically, click on the links below. For others, use the key words in the links to search for the articles:

[Kelly Bostian Tulsa World A Trail of Tears landmark almost became a poultry operation](#)

[Grant Crawford Tahlequah Daily Press A Win for Water](#)

Emily Hyde-Where is She Now?

Emily Hyde was a board member of SCC when she was a senior in high school. She graduated this



Emily Hyde at Earth Day, April 22nd.

Clean Waters

spring from OSU majoring in Environmental Science with an emphasis in Water Resources. She will start graduate work this fall in Minnesota.

On April 22, on her own initiative, Emily staffed a booth for SCC at Earth Day on Guthrie Green in Tulsa. She was an energetic and positive force for Spring Creek Coalition, signing up several new members. “I credit my time with SCC for giving me my direction in life, and I wanted to give back,” said Emily. That’s rewarding to hear, Emily. Thank you.

Spring Creek Among State’s Cleanest Waters

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) has released its latest biennial report of water quality monitoring in the state, and it gives Spring Creek a rare Category 1 grade for meeting applicable water quality standards. The report, titled the *Integrated Water Quality Assessment*, combines water quality data collected by multiple state, federal, and municipal agencies, by the Cherokee Nation, and by private citizens. It is used to identify waters that are not meeting standards (impaired water bodies) as well as those that are.

The new edition of the report summarizes the monitoring of 4,212 separate surface water bodies, including 3,783 streams and 429 lakes. Of those, only Spring Creek and 2 other streams and 3 lakes exhibited a raw water quality that achieved Category 1 status.

A 1 is issued only when water fully supports all five beneficial use categories designated by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board Beneficial Use Management Program (OWRB BUMP). The five are aesthetics, agriculture, cool water aquatic community, fish consumption, and primary body contact recreation.

Spring Creek also received a Category 1 in 2008, but since then traces of E.coli have lowered its rating.

Pensacola Dam

According to the OWRB website, E. coli bacteria come from feces of humans, livestock and wildlife. Sources include agricultural runoff, animal waste, human waste, leaky sewer lines, onsite septic systems, and storm water runoff.

Lance Phillips of the OWRB Water Quality Program, noted that OWRB’s tolerance on E. coli detection is very low. Even a slight amount reduces a stream’s rating.

The fact that Spring Creek recently came up clean again is cause for celebration, but continued monitoring is needed. Since January, the Peggs Water Company has been required to test for E. coli monthly. Oklahoma Conservation Commission Blue Thumb volunteers monitor at one station above Teresita. And SCC is looking into the possibility of checking regularly for phosphorous to see if the influx of poultry houses in the area is affecting the creek.

The new water quality report can be viewed or downloaded at the ODEQ’s website, at http://www.deq.state.ok.us/wqdnw/305b_303d/. Look for Spring Creek coded as OK121600010290_00 in Appendix B of the *Integrated 2016 Report*.

Pensacola Dam Outing



18 enjoy the Pensacola Dam tour April 14th.