

# THE ENVIRONMENTOR

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## Eastern Red Cedars Plague Oklahoma

Now, I'm not that old (especially in the opinion of those older than me), but even I can remember going out with the family in December to look for and cut just the right tree for Christmas décor. Of course, it had to be an evergreen tree, and 35 years ago, just like now, the only evergreen tree native to Love County, America, was eastern red cedar. The biggest difference between then and now, which is probably why I can so vividly remember those family outings, is that you had to look pretty hard in most of Love County to even find a cedar tree, much less one "just right."

Today in Love County, you can see an eastern red cedar tree from just about any vantage point. This is the case for many other counties in Oklahoma as well. In 1993, Terry Bidwell, associate professor of rangeland ecology and Extension range specialist at Oklahoma State University stated that Oklahoma is experiencing the most rapid and extensive change in its landscape since the land runs and associated farming that began in



the late 1800s. Due mainly to fire suppression, eastern red cedar and ashe juniper (red cedar) had invaded almost 1.5 million acres in Oklahoma by 1950, 3.5 million acres by 1985 and 6 million acres by 1994 (Engle et. al. 1996). Currently, the Oklahoma Natural Resources Conservation Service estimates that Oklahoma is losing 762 acres of rangeland (one of our most diverse and valuable ecosystems) per day. Yes, that's per day. Think about that for a minute. There are 640 acres in a square mile.

This should be of serious concern to all Oklahomans, not just farmers and ranchers. The continued spread of red cedar is a serious threat to our state's natural resources and, therefore, our economy. In its final report, the Red Cedar Task Force estimated that in 2001, the annual economic loss for catastrophic wildfire, loss of cattle forage, loss of wildlife habitat (lease hunting), recreation and *(Continued on Page 5)*

### Inside this issue:

OKAEE News: EE Expo 2006	2
Why Biodiversity is Important	3-4
Global Mid-Del Partnership	5/7
Stories from the Earthteller	6
Trash Poster Contest	7
Resources	8
Events	9-10
Calendar	11
Green Christmas Poem	11

## Oklahoma Sustainability Network (OSN) Working Locally

About three years ago, the Oklahoma Sustainability Network (OSN) board of directors realized that most societal changes must be made through work at the local level. Thus, OSN began to encourage and support the organization of local chapters, beginning with Tulsa. Four statewide conferences have been held, with Dr. Mathis Wackernagel (Ecological Footprint) and Hunter Lovins (Natural Capitalism) as keynotes in 2004-05. E-mail lists and a bulletin board for information sharing, are available through the OSN website: [www.oksustainability.org](http://www.oksustainability.org). Following are reports from leaders of current OSN chapters.

The mission of Sustainable Stillwater (SustSTW) is to promote community sustainability, connect those working to-

ward sustainability, and serve as a resource for environmental information integral to the sustainable future of Stillwater and Oklahoma.

Ongoing efforts include educational displays at local events such as Stillwater Farmer's Market and Payne County Audubon Society's Nature Day. SustSTW also maintains the Stillwater Recycling Guide and works with local organizations that have "adopted" the City's recycle drop-off sites.

Collaboration with partners is key to SustSTW's outreach efforts. Recently, SustSTW joined the Stillwater Trails Task Force to work on the City's master plan for interconnected multi-use trails. In November, the group collaborated with ECO-OSU to present a screening of

the documentary, "Blue Vinyl" and there are plans to show, "The Next Industrial Revolution" in spring. Future plans also include partnering with Stillwater Head Start and other collaborators to develop a community garden and outdoor classroom at the facility. To learn more about Sustainable Stillwater or to join the listserv, e-mail [recyclingcoalition@hotmail.com](mailto:recyclingcoalition@hotmail.com).


Sustainable OKC has been busy this fall. In the past couple of months, Sustainable OKC has hosted a panel discussion on smart growth and urban development in Oklahoma City, continued the monthly Green Drinks event, attended the Peace Festival, and concluded our volunteer season for the Urban Harvest program at the *(Continued on Page 4)*

**2006 Oklahoma Association for  
Environmental Education  
Annual EE Expo—Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**




Mark your calendars! Hold the date . . . Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at the OKC Zoo Education Building. This year's conference theme is "Celebrating Oklahoma's Biodiversity." Mile for mile, Oklahoma offers the nation's most diverse terrain. It's one of only four states with more than 10 eco-regions, and has by far, the most per mile in America according to the EPA. Oklahoma's eco-regions include everything from Rocky Mountain foothills to cypress swamps, tall grass prairies, and hardwood forests to pine-covered mountains. Join OKAEE in exploring and celebrating the 11 eco-regions found within our great state. As featured speakers, native Oklahomans will be sharing their knowledge, skills and resources. Tentative topics include: birding in Oklahoma, tall grass prairie, Oklahoma reptiles and amphibians, plants of Oklahoma, inventorying Oklahoma's biodiversity with BioBlitz, just to name a few! The culminating event of the EE Expo will be a guided, pre-view tour of the OKC Zoo's newest exhibit, Oklahoma Trails. The exhibit, which isn't open to the public until March 2006, is a five-acre trek through Oklahoma's 11 eco-regions. Native plants and animals associated with each eco-region are found throughout the exhibit. The exhibit even boasts a scaled down Turner Falls!



 **When:** Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 8-4pm

**Where:** OKC Zoo Rosser Conservation Education Building

**Conference Chair:** Teresa Randall, 405-454-3319 (after 6pm) or email okaeeteresa@yahoo.com

 **Cost:** Includes registration fee and lunch plus one year OKAEE membership\*


Early bird registration through January 27<sup>th</sup> (either online or via mail):

\$35 regular conference registration or \$25 student rate.

Late registration after January 27<sup>th</sup> (either online or via mail):

\$50 regular conference registration or \$40 student rate.

**Note: Late registrants  
won't be guaranteed  
lunch.**

 **Website address:** [www.okaee.org](http://www.okaee.org) (Check back here often to get updates and more information. Host hotel and directions to the Zoo will be given as well. All online forms can be found here as well.)



The annual EE Expo allows OKAEE to re-focus on our mission statement, which is to:

- Create a networking system to facilitate discussion and resource sharing among Oklahoma environmental educators.
- Encourage, promote and assist in the development and dissemination of environmental education.
- Conduct and support environmental education programs in the state.
- Recognize exemplary efforts in environmental education.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

To support teachers to attend, OKAEE has obtained 60 registration fee waivers. Waivers of \$35 will be awarded to teachers. There are no restrictions as to the definition of "teacher" – ie: formal vs. informal educator, elementary vs. secondary educator, public vs. private vs. home school, etc. However, an application, which can be found online at [www.okaee.org](http://www.okaee.org), must be submitted in order to be considered for a waiver. Contact Cheryl Cheadle, [cherylc@okcc.state.ok.us](mailto:cherylc@okcc.state.ok.us) if you have any questions. The Oklahoma Zoological Society (OZS) graciously sponsored these waivers. Additionally, OKC Zoo educators will have Oklahoma Trails curriculum available for teachers to take back home for use in their classrooms.

Other things to check out at the Expo include our:

- **EXHIBITS** – this is a great place to network and get lots of cool environmental education ideas and goodies. If you are interested in an exhibit (or any other type of sponsorship) please contact Mary Coley, [Mmcint2415@aol.com](mailto:Mmcint2415@aol.com). Online exhibit registration is also available at [www.okaee.org](http://www.okaee.org).
- **SILENT AUCTION** – many environmentally themed items await you! If you'd like to donate some items or help during the auction please contact Karla Beatty, [karlab@okcc.state.ok.us](mailto:karlab@okcc.state.ok.us)
- **AWARDS CEREMONY** – to recognize EE excellence, we offer six awards. The award categories are: lifetime achievement, president's achievement, classroom teacher, outstanding high school or college student, outstanding organization and excellence in media. Online nominations are available at [www.okaee.org](http://www.okaee.org) or contact Dr. Richard Bryant, [richard.bryant@okstate.edu](mailto:richard.bryant@okstate.edu).

As conference chair, I invite every one of you to come help OKAEE "Celebrate Oklahoma's Biodiversity" at this years EE Expo!

*Teresa Randall*  
OKAEE President-Elect

