



## Notes from the Chief

*What I'm working on for You*

Osiyo -

Protecting the environment and practicing conservation principles have always been important to the Cherokee people. Our close relationship to the land, and our traditional knowledge about our natural surroundings, has always been a part of who we are. Cherokee values and knowledge about ecological preservation, acquired over multiple generations, can benefit all of northeast Oklahoma. Today, the Cherokee Nation Office of Environmental Services oversees the programs and services related to preservation and conservation of our air, land, water, and animal and plant life.

Recently, the tribe earned a \$75,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency that will help support the critical environmental work that we do at the local level. The partnership between Cherokee Nation and the EPA benefits our people, our environmental endeavors, and the health and beauty of northeast Oklahoma.

Together with the EPA's federal dollars, we can sustain the environmental protection efforts that preserve our clean air, healthy land and fresh water. The Cherokee Nation's five-person Environmental Protection Commission, with the leadership of Secretary of Natural Resources Sara Hill, administers the Nation's environmental programs and develops community and education programs.

The Cherokee Nation is also a founding member of the Inter-Tribal Environmental Council, an organization that helps protect the health of Native Americans, tribal natural resources and the environment. This intertribal organization was created to provide support, technical assistance, program development and training to member tribes nationwide. Today, almost 50 tribal governments are members and share best practices.

An excellent example of our renewed conservation efforts was a recent federal court decision naming Cherokee Nation the court-appointed steward of restoration efforts of Saline Creek in Mayes County.

David Benham, a Cherokee Nation citizen originally from the Kenwood area and a property owner along the creek bank, personally sued Ozark Materials River Rock for the extreme damage done to the water. The company, who will pay for the restoration effort, mined at the foot of the creek, removing the gravel at the lower reaches. Erosion upstream redirected the creek and eroded vegetation, which in turn increased stream temperature and algae growth.

It is fitting and appropriate that the court appointed Cherokee Nation to manage the recovery of these damaged areas. Saline Creek has spiritual as well as historical significance to Cherokee Nation citizens, and it is one of the most beautiful creeks in northeast Oklahoma. Cherokee Nation is always willing to serve as stewards of our lands and waters so they will be protected for generations to come.

Our tribal government strives to build a better future for our people. Protecting the environment through Cherokee Nation's active and progressive conservation programs is one of the most important things we can do to ensure we achieve that goal.

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