



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You



Osiyo -

Cherokee Nation is the first tribal government in America to organize a conservation area to protect an endangered species, the American Burying Beetle. We collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to designate land at the National Cherokee Nation Park, located on Sallisaw Creek in Sequoyah County, as a place to preserve this species.

The terrain of the area is a natural habitat for the beetle, which has been on the federal Endangered Species List in 1989 and exists today in only four states: Oklahoma, Arkansas, Nebraska and Rhode Island. The agreement will limit development on the site for the next 10 years and will enable the beetle population to thrive. Wildlife experts consider the beetles valuable to the local ecosystem because they return essential nutrients to the soil.

The preservation designation, the first collaboration of its kind between federal and tribal government partners, will not interrupt recreational activities at the park, and just as importantly, it will also help keep road construction projects and business development efforts moving forward in the future.

We strive to balance our critical role as environmental stewards and as a key economic driver in northeast Oklahoma. Performing endangered species surveys has been known to delay and even halt development work, but this conservation easement creates a way for growth to continue without endangering the beetle.

This endeavor, spearheaded by our dedicated staff in the office of the Secretary of Natural Resources, is just one example of Cherokee Nation leading the way in Indian Country. Another example of how we set trends locally, here in Oklahoma, is a recent partnership we created with the state of Oklahoma. The formation of the Coordinating Council on Poultry Growth will enable the tribe and state to study the expansion of poultry production and its impact on rural communities and citizens in northeast Oklahoma.

In addition to the tribe and the state being at the table, the council will also engage other state agencies, scientific researchers, agricultural experts and community stakeholders to improve communication and access to information. The council will include staff from Oklahoma's Department of Food, Forestry and Agriculture, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, the Grand River Dam Authority, and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

These kinds of state panels have been coordinated in the past for other complicated issues, but there has never been one jointly created with one of Oklahoma's federally recognized tribes. This is another first for the Cherokee Nation, and I am proud we are continuing to lead the way in these environmental protection efforts.

Smart business development, combined with natural resource conservation and protection, means Cherokee Nation is playing its leadership role in building a smarter and more sustainable model for future generations of Oklahomans.

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Bill John Baker



17675 S. Muskogee Ave.
Tahlequah, OK 74465
918-453-5000

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Cherokee Nation P.O. Box 948 Tahlequah, OK 74465