

# EMPOWERING AGRICULTURE



## THE C.A.R.E PROJECT'S IMPACT ON DIVERSITY, EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

“Together with our partners, we are working towards a more inclusive agricultural landscape, ensuring that ALL farmers and ranchers have equal opportunities to benefit from conservation programs.”

– Sarah Blaney | Executive Director  
Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

The Conservation and Agriculture Reach Everyone ( CARE ) project is a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing the participation of farmers and ranchers in conservation practices, with a particular focus on socially disadvantaged and veteran producers.

The project not only seeks to improve soil health and water quality but also aims to strengthen the capacity of participating organizations to better serve minority and veteran producers. The program is co-created by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and the Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project.

**Diverse Strategies for Inclusive Impact:**

To increase outreach to minority and veteran producers, the CARE project identified key strategies. With just one conservation planner on staff, we worked with local communities and conservation districts to identify community members interested in the project. The recruitment of conservation planners, project coordinators and assistants was the first step. Subsequently, a comprehensive survey assessed participants' knowledge of conservation terminology, programs and the unique challenges faced by minority farmers.





### **Education as the Catalyst for Change:**

The project's training sessions encompassed a broad spectrum, including NRCS 101, historical perspectives of black and Native American farmers, and conservation planning over the first quarter of 2021.

This approach aimed not only to educate but to foster understanding and collaboration within diverse agricultural communities.

In addition, we created an 11 page "recommended readings" document that includes news articles, podcasts, movies, documentaries, and historical documents for partners to gain more understanding of the unique issues facing minority farmers and ranchers.





## **Identifying and Elevating Champions:**

Recognizing the power of personal narratives, the CARE project identified and onboarded 27 champions from various backgrounds, including a Cherokee Nation citizen farming land allotted through the Dawes Act. These champions became voices to share the benefits of USDA services, emphasizing the importance of representation and relatability in outreach efforts.

## **Addressing Systemic Challenges:**

The CARE project addressed systemic challenges faced by heirs property and highly fractionated lands, collaborating with legal scholars and farm economics experts. Efforts culminated in the identification of champions across various demographics, reflecting the project's commitment to inclusivity.

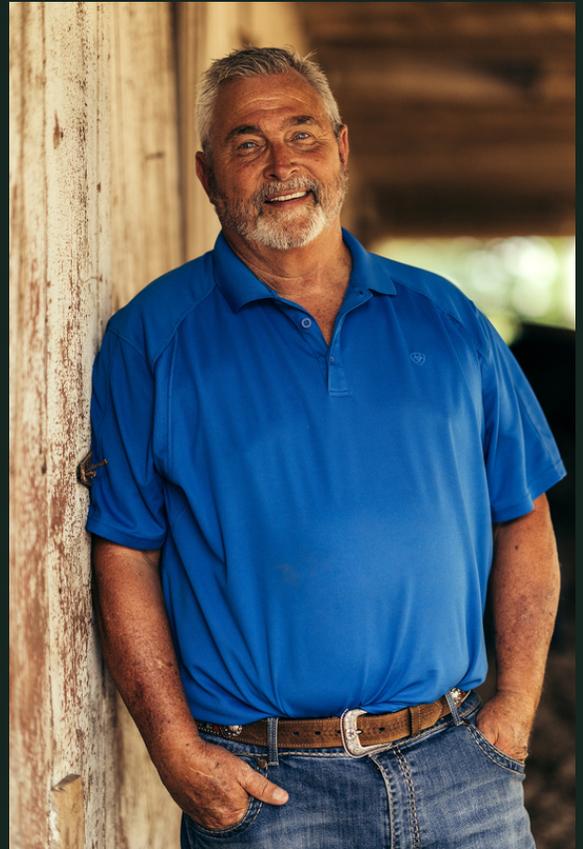
## **Advocacy for Legislative Change:**

Engaging with state representatives, the project directors advocated for the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, seeking to simplify solutions for highly fractionated and heirs property issues. The project's efforts extended to educating the broader agriculture community about the importance of addressing these issues, aligning with provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill.



## **Building Trust and Diversity in Agriculture Leadership:**

The CARE project not only increased outreach to minority producers but also focused on diversifying leadership within the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. The results, including a more diverse board and the first black vice president in the 85 year history, are indicative of the project's long-term commitment to fostering diversity in agriculture leadership.



## **Measuring Success:**

Quantitative measures underscore the project's success, with 7,964 producers reached, including 3,899 from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and 524 veterans.

Surveys provided critical insights, and a series of trainings, webinars, and field days showcased the tangible impact of the CARE program.

A 5 minute film about the project was created and disseminated to 76 partners to share. The CARE film project is the kick-off of the effort to raise \$500,000 in private funding to use for direct payments to SDA producers.

The short film can be seen [HERE](#).





The CARE project stands as a beacon of change, demonstrating the power of education, advocacy, and representation in transforming agriculture into a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

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For more information on the program, please contact  
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