

# Ribbon Cutting held for Dam Rehabilitation Project at Crowder Lake

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University President Randy Beutler (front from left), Deer Creek Conservation District Board of Directors Bertha Miller and Alveta Taylor, both of Thomas, and State Representative Harold Wright cut the ribbon at the recent official re-opening of Crowder Lake University Park. It marks the completion of an approximately two-year, \$4.2 million flood control structure rehabilitation project by the Deer Creek Conservation District and SWOSU.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University and the Deer Creek Conservation District recently hosted local and state officials at a ribbon cutting at Crowder Lake University Park to officially re-open the facility for all activities. It marks the completion of an approximately two-year, \$4.2 million flood control structure rehabilitation project.

DCCD and SWOSU are co-sponsors of the project.

The Crowder Lake dam was constructed for flood control in 1958 by the Deer Creek Conservation District with assistance of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program. The dam was originally designed as a low hazard dam and constructed to protect rural agricultural land from flooding. Because of later development downstream, the dam was reclassified as high hazard in 2006. The dam was rehabilitated to bring it up to current dam safety criteria and extend its life for another 100 years. Rehabilitation included raising the height of the dam, replacing the principal spillway and widening the auxiliary spillway.

Flooding occurred frequently in the watershed before the watershed project was implemented. From 1923 to 1942, there were 13 floods where water covered more than one-half of the watershed flood plain and 67 smaller floods.

In 1983, the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department created a state park around the lake and it became known as Crowder Lake State Park. In 1997, SWOSU took over management of the park and in 2003 the OTRD transferred the lake to SWOSU and it became known as Crowder Lake University Park. Paul Hummel serves as director of the park.

Hummel said SWOSU utilizes the lake in conducting courses such as a ropes course, wilderness first aid, sailing, canoeing, hiking and climbing. What started out as a single purpose flood control dam has been turned into a great location for college students to learn skills outside the classroom, a recreational area for the university and area citizens, and a lake with enhanced fish and wildlife habitat areas.