

FALL 2024

# ANNUAL REPORT

OSU's Office of Sustainability



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## Cowboy Conservation

INSIDE OSU'S SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES  
KATIE BEITZ - SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR

Some of the things I love most about working for a university is the tradition and history associated with it. The traditions and history of its land and its people, as well as the history that created its success. I feel it when I walk to the Student Union and pass by iconic places like Theta Pond, Old Central, Edmon Low Library, or the Formal Garden. I feel it when I meet new students and they talk about the reasons they decided to come to school here. I hear it when I meet faculty and staff when they tell me the reasons why they have continued to work here, even when they have had other opportunities.

When some people look at sustainability, they see it as being contrary to the history and traditions of a place. They see it as introducing change into the systems that have served us well for over 100 years. But I see it as an enhancement to what we have already built. I see sustainability as small changes that over time build into something much larger, something that becomes a part of the traditions, and enhances our future.



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## This issue:

Cowboy Conservation  
PAGE 01

Environmental Impacts  
PAGE 02 - PAGE 03

Earth Day  
PAGE 03

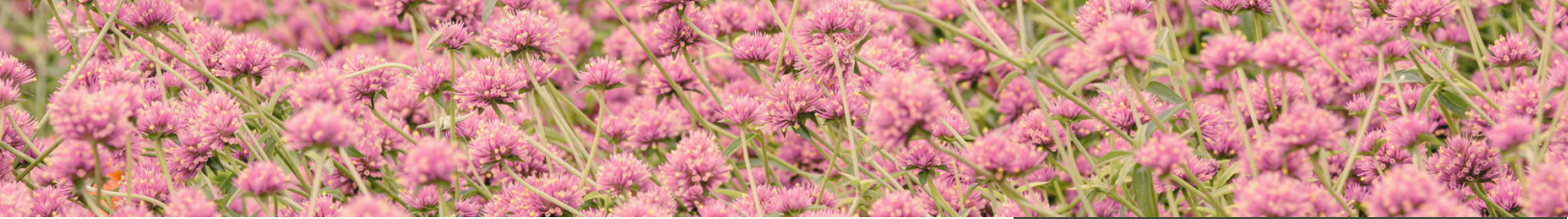
Social Impacts  
PAGE 04

Economic Impacts  
PAGE 04

Powering a Brighter Orange  
PAGE 05

THE Impact Rankings  
PAGE 05

Native Plant Corridor  
PAGE 06



## Environmental Impacts

When most people think about sustainability they think about the environment. But the planet is just a portion of sustainability as a whole. There have been some great articles that have come across my desk this past school year that have related specifically to the environmental impact we are making. University operations, research areas, and student events are just some of the ways we focus on our environmental impact.



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UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS

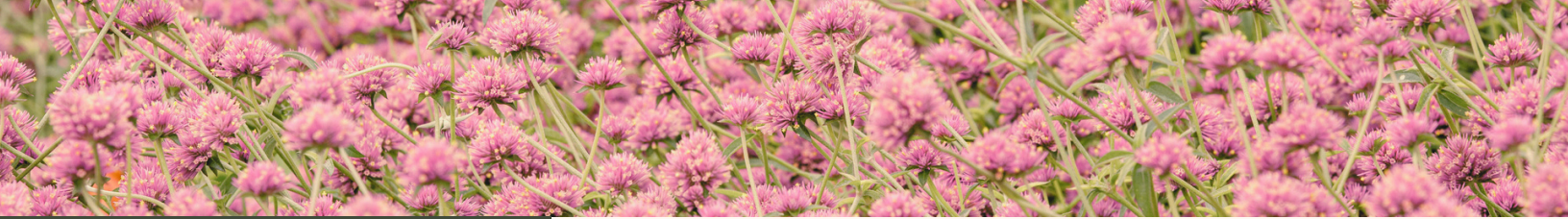
Energy Services focuses not just on getting electricity from traditional means, but also uses wind energy. As a result, OSU was named as a top 30 College and University EPA Green Power Partner. We have been a part of the EPS Green Power Partnership program since 2013. Another way we focus on the planet is through recycling. OSU partnered with OSU Extension, the City of Stillwater, and the Oklahoma Recycling Association (OKRA) to bring the inaugural Oklahoma Recycling Festival to Stillwater in March. Landscape Services unveiled a new year-round topiary that highlights the entry point to our Native Plant Corridor. An area that covers 1/4th of a mile of sidewalk traveling from Hester to Monroe behind Edmon Low Library. This corridor uses all native plants requiring less maintenance and water use. Another contribution from Landscape Services was the mobile solar charging station for their battery-powered equipment. The mobility allows it to be stationed in any parking lot on campus making it more accessible to the crews. The battery-powered equipment provides quieter maintenance, and the solar panels charge the batteries without using electricity from the campus utilities.

“One man  
can make a  
difference  
and every  
man should  
try.”

JACQUELINE KENNEDY  
ONASSIS



Photo by OSU Landscape Services



“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced”

JAMES BALDWIN



Photo by OSU Landscape Services

## UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

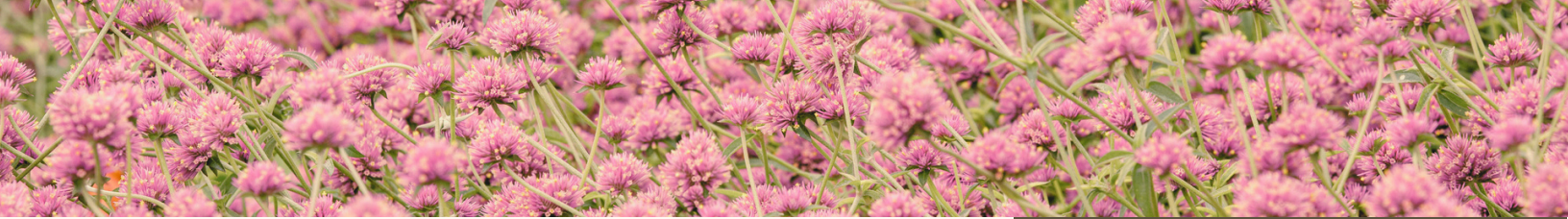
Other environmental impacts are made through different areas of research. In the College of Arts and Sciences, they have launched a national campaign focused on the groundwater industry. For the third year in a row, they have hosted the Oklahoma Groundwater Association Conference. The OSU Geology department has received a \$2 million EPA Grant to research and enhance aquifer recharge. Just as we were about to wrap up our newsletter an article came through about CEAT’s Gonzalez Estrella being awarded an NSF CAREER Grant related to his research on micro- and nanoplastics. And this is all just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to research on campus. There are over 300 faculty members doing sustainability-related research across campus.



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## Earth Day

Earth Day 2024 was also a big success this year, with over 500 students in attendance to visit various sustainability student groups and departments on campus. The biggest hit of the event was the succulents handed out by Energy Services when students stopped and answered questions about sustainability on campus. Landscape Services was also in attendance giving away plants, and educating students on our Tree Campus USA certification we have had since 2011, and our newest accreditation we received in 2022 as a Level II Arboretum. Other student groups were on hand such as the Pre-Professionals Club, Engineers Without Borders, Association of Landscape Architects, Environmental Sciences, Geology Club, and the Student Union Activities Board (SUAB).



## Social Impacts

Another aspect of sustainability that not everyone recognizes is Social Sustainability. Social sustainability is a focus on the well-being of the people. This is accomplished in many different ways on campus. Not only is the focus on students, but also on faculty, staff, and the surrounding community.

A big part of social sustainability here on our campus is [Pete's Pantry, our on-campus food pantry](#) for all of the OSU community. They have partnered with Our Daily Bread, as well as with Student Union Dining to provide food pantry items and hot meals from food that would be discarded at the end of the day. Another large contributor to social sustainability to our campus and our community is the [Student Farm](#) which began as a project to simply help Our Daily Bread obtain fresh produce and has now become a much larger operation able to contribute to more places. A great example of small steps to make a big impact. Students also reach out two times every year to volunteer in the community. [Into the Streets](#) attracted over 2,000 students and staff this Spring

The impact social sustainability has on our campus also reaches our staff as [OSU was named one of America's Best Employers in 2024.](#)



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## Economic Impacts

The last focus of sustainability on our campus is Economic sustainability which requires OSU to use its resources efficiently and responsibly. One of the ways I have seen that acted out on our campus was when we were [Ranked as the Best Value Public University in Oklahoma by US News and World Report.](#) This harkens back to our Presidential Plan published in 2022 where OSU made commitments to student success with objectives including lowering the average debt of students.

During our spring residential life move-out OSU students donated over 570 pounds of items to Goodwill. That's the equivalent of 7 people's annual landfill waste according to Goodwill Industries International.

“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you”

RUTH BADER GINSBURG



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## Powering a Brighter Orange

The Oklahoma State University Landscape Services participated in PhilantroPete in the spring of 2023 to raise money for Flipping The Switch “Powering Towards A Brighter Orange”. It was their initiative to introduce an electric battery-operated platform that supports the beautification of the campus landscape. An enclosed cargo trailer was converted to support charging, storage, and landscape accessibility to battery-operated equipment while performing landscape duties on campus. This trailer increases team efficiency, reduces the carbon footprint in fuel consumption, and provides an opportunity for noise reduction in landscape beautification. Because of OSU donor commitments, we can provide the industry’s best with cutting-edge equipment to showcase their talents.



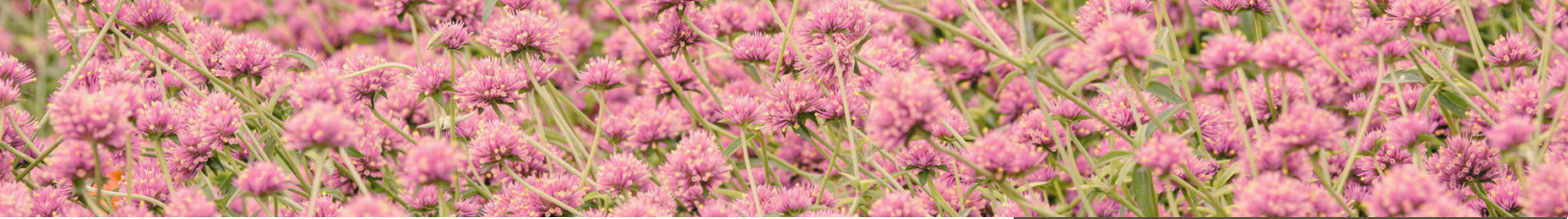
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## Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

In 2020 OSU made Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) our framework for international engagement. Adopted in 2015 by world leaders, SDGs are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future. OSU’s efforts toward sustainability in 2024 earned a Times Higher Education Impact Ranking in the top 200 of all universities globally and tied for fourth in the US. There are 17 SDG categories ranging from education, equality, and clean energy. OSU was ranked #1 in our efforts toward Zero Hunger, SDG 2, based on the efforts of Campus Life and the Pete’s Pantry, Pete’s Eats, and the School of Ag’s Student Farm.

“When will people fully understand and accept the obligation to the future – when will they behave as custodians and not owners of the earth?”

RACHEL CARSON



## Native Plant Corridor

The Biodiversity Garden, a captivating retreat within the Native Plant Corridor, serves as a sanctuary for the smallest inhabitants of our ecosystem. The pollinator hotel provides shelter for many fascinating critters, underscoring the garden's commitment to fostering biodiversity. A splendid butterfly topiary helps to celebrate the beauty of the area celebrating the delicate beauty of these pollinators. Meandering walking paths wind through the landscape, inviting exploration and contemplation. Thoughtfully placed seating areas offer tranquil respites, where visitors can take a break, study, or have lunch while connecting with nature. This portion of the Native Plant Corridor was made possible by: Senior Administration, Office of Sustainability, OSU Student ASLA Chapter, Facilities Management Landscape Services Design and Installation Services



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### Contact Us:

We have covered a lot of news in this edition, and I'm sure we missed more. We appreciate all of you that have been involved in OSU's sustainability journey so far, and look forward to all we will accomplish in the coming years. If you would like to share information or suggestions with us please reach out. If you would like to take the next step and join our Sustainability Committee please send me an email.

 [www.fm.okstate.edu/landscape-services/sustainability](http://www.fm.okstate.edu/landscape-services/sustainability)

 @OSUgreen

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“In everything you recognize yourself”

ALBERT SCHWEITZER



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