



FALL 2026

ANNUAL REPORT

OSU's Office of Sustainability

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Cowboy Conservation

INSIDE OSU'S SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES
KATIE BEITZ - SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR

Over my last two Annual Reports, I've written about the traditions of OSU — not just the buildings and grounds, but the things that become part of our DNA, and how sustainability doesn't compete with that history so much as weave into it.

This October, we received STARS Silver, recognition of work across this campus that's added up over years of small decisions. You may have also noticed some of that work directly: updated signage on standard recycling bins, a new recycling trailer for tailgates and large gatherings, and event recycling bins that travel alongside it. Small, practical changes — but the kind that make doing the right thing easier.

This is also my last report in this role. This fall, I'm starting as a full-time graduate student in Geography, working as a graduate assistant while I study. It's less of a departure than it sounds — my background in landscape and sustainability is what pulled me toward geography, and I want to explore the mapping side of this work at a different scale, in service of the same questions.

I've spent these years writing about this campus's traditions — the land, the people, the history that keeps drawing folks back. I'm grateful to have witnessed so much of it up close, from the coffee cup planters to the plant rental program to this year's recycling efforts. Looking forward to seeing where it goes, just from a different vantage point.

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Earth Day 2026

Earth Day exceeded our expectations this year. Twenty-five OSU and City of Stillwater groups came together to celebrate, turning campus into a hub of hands-on sustainability. Highlights included free succulents and seeds to take home, bracelet making, and flower arranging — simple, tactile ways for people to connect with sustainability rather than just read about it.

It's a good reminder that some of the best sustainability work isn't a policy or a program, but a table, a few seed packets, and a chance for people across campus and the community to show up in the same place.



STARS

This October, OSU earned a Silver rating in STARS, the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System — a self-reporting framework developed by the higher education community and administered by AASHE, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. STARS measures sustainability across four areas: Academics, Engagement, Operations, and Planning & Administration, with an institution's overall score, not any single category, determining its rating.

Earning Silver reflects work happening across campus, not any one office or program — from curriculum and research to how we operate day-to-day. STARS also gives us a consistent way to track our own progress over time and compare notes with peer institutions doing similar work, which makes the rating less a finish line than a marker of where we stand and where there's room to keep improving.

“Sustainability
is no longer
about doing
less harm. It’s
about doing
more good”

JOCHEN ZEITZ

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**“Surely we have
a responsibility
to leave for
future
generations a
planet that is
healthy and
habitable by all
species”**

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH



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Research

Across campus, undergraduate research groups spent this year tackling sustainability questions in ways that stretch well beyond the classroom. One group shared a full look at their work, and the range says a lot about how broadly "sustainability" gets applied here.

The Kudzu Project continued work from the 2024–25 academic year, tracking kudzu's spread in Oklahoma along with the kudzu bug, a pest drawn to kudzu and other legumes that has followed the plant into the state. This year's group expanded the project's maps and educational materials, including new infographics for Extension use.

A team rebuilding the 2026 Envirothon, a high school sustainability competition, hosted this year's event and built a planning document for future years. Another partnered with Restore OKC, studying soils and designing a garden and hoophouse installation. A third supported an ongoing graduate project tracking the Theta Pond algal bloom through sample collection and nutrient tracking.

Other projects included OKC Mulching, exploring how the city's collected tree debris could become resident-available mulch; soil testing with Landscape Services to guide accurate seasonal fertilization; and the Student Farm Compost Project, now in its third year, advancing the farm's composting system. Two additional groups, studying the Osage Nation partnership and dragonflies and livestock flies, rounded out this year's work and presentations.

Engineering students took on sustainability projects too — including a standout team that designed solar-powered parking lot lights for low-light and construction-affected areas, running entirely off-grid to keep campus safe wherever power isn't reliable.



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Closing Out the Fiscal Year

As the fiscal year closes, the Office of Sustainability is wrapping up several smaller projects that round out initiatives we've been building toward all year — from composting and recycling infrastructure to campus gardens and pollinator habitat.

Compost Tea Project

We're bringing compost tea production to campus. Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) donated a used shed at no cost, which we'll relocate to the Greenhouse, refurbish, and use to house a vermicompost operation for producing nutrient-rich compost tea for campus gardens and landscaping.

Recycling Trailer

The Recycling Trailer project has reached its final release phase, with the last components being added to outfit the trailer for active use on campus and at events.

Campus Standard Recycling Signs

This final batch of signage completes the campus-wide rollout of standard three-bin recycling and trash stations. Consistent signage is key to helping people sort correctly and reducing contamination.

Pumpkin and Watermelon Garden

Pumpkins and gourds harvested this fall will serve as seasonal campus decorations and centerpieces for student events like pumpkin decorating contests. The watermelons will go to the annual Landscape Services Appreciation Event at summer's end — a local, sustainable way to celebrate the team's hard work.

Pocket Prairie - Corner of McElroy and Western

This established garden continues to support local pollinators and biodiversity while cutting down on mowing and irrigation needs. The project is currently in its expansion and site-assessment phase.

Looking Ahead

Together, these projects close gaps in our recycling infrastructure, expand our composting and habitat programs, and give our team the space and tools to keep doing this work well. Thanks to partners like EHS, we're carrying this momentum into the new fiscal year.



Photo by OSU Landscape Services



Photo by OSU Landscape Services



Photo by OSU Landscape Services



**“Always do your
very best. Even
when no one
else is looking,
you always are.
Don’t
disappoint
yourself”**

COLIN POWELL

Contact Us:

We have covered a lot of news in this edition, and I’m sure we missed more. We appreciate all of you who 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



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