

The LEADer



CLIMIGRATION PROJECTS BEGIN

As a member of the **Next Steps Cohort** with Climigration Network, LEAD has received funding for a series of pilot projects to begin mitigation efforts in the area for some of the issues we face related to climate and our close relationship with the Tar Creek Superfund site.

Through the Neighborhood Flood Survey LEAD completed in and around Miami, we began to understand more fully the extent of the risk some residents may face in their homes from the exposures they can receive from the air blowing out of floor ducts. Some ranch style homes have ductwork embedded with chat beneath slab floors. We have completed two pilot projects to reduce or eliminate exposures from chat dust blowing from the ducts that we believe may have been deteriorating from the chemical reaction to chat when it gets wet.

What we are attempting to do is to find HVAC contractors who will work with us to find the most efficient and feasible way to protect people in their homes.

LEAD does not have the means to address all the properties we believe have HVAC systems that need to be changed or replaced. We want to provide guidance to EPA or other federal, state or private means to assist our community members at risk. Ours are demonstration projects, ones we hope will become templates for large scaled future efforts to protect human health.

Climigration

BACKGROUND

Just as LEAD Agency was beginning, we learned about the damaged HVAC ductwork in some area homes and we reported it to EPA in **1996**, asking for remedial action as aggressive as the Emergency Action taken when area children were found to be lead poisoned and first high access Areas were dug up and replaced with clean soil when high levels of lead were found. Since it was the same substance potentially harming children **INSIDE** their homes as was being replaced from playgrounds and front and backyards of residential property, we wanted and demanded action. We were denied. EPA did do some sampling, and analyzed the samples and wrote a report in **2007** and released the report **16** years later. We believe this has been an environmental justice issue all these years.

The action EPA took in 1995 was to issue what they call a **Record of Decision** to take on the residential and High Access Areas and lead contaminated yards and remove the soil and replace it with clean soils. EPA called this Operable Unit 2 for residential yards and they have been doing this yard work since 1995. Every resident in Ottawa County is eligible to have their yard tested for high levels of lead and have it removed for **FREE**. Last January EPA lowered the Action level for lead in soil and because of that the ROD (the Record of Decision) will have to be re-opened. LEAD wants to force EPA to address the contaminate **INSIDE** homes and protect human health and protect every individual living in homes with deteriorated ductwork.

WE ask you to speak up for yourselves and for your neighbors and for the people who will live in your home long after you have moved or passed on. Ask and if you want, join us in DEMANDING ACTION



The DVD in the Box

While sorting a box of papers at the LEAD Agency, a single loose DVD with **2007 flood** written in black marker lay in front of me. At the end of one of the last working days of the year, we connected a DVD player, downloaded a program to play it. Forty-five minutes later it ended. It showed what a single man in a boat saw as the water had reached a flood stage with roads closed to traffic except for boats like his.

We went to familiar places. We saw landmarks that are still there. Homes that didn't make it have long since been removed.

What we hear is the motor of the boat. The water could be seen moving.

The water was Neosho River brown, but always flowing, not rushing water, flowing determined to pass.

We then went on away from town. We made it to the Serenity Inn and the businesses beside and behind it, we crossed the road to see the One Stop. All had taken the flood waters in. There would be no way to stop them.

All through the footage is the date and time, the seconds on the July 3rd ticking by, July 4 ticking by as the boat takes us to see the water levels change, ever higher.

July 5, I don't think it showed us any footage that day, but July 6.

It was all different that day.

We were not in the boat. We were on foot and the sounds of footsteps in saturated soil slogging through a wet field as the homestead was investigated. The water had receded.

When the front door was approached, we entered the home and heard the words of warning, "Watch out for snakes and spiders." We see neither.

But we see the water had changed everything in each of the rooms we encountered. Nothing was in a regular place. Disrupted and ruined by floodwater.

The whole contents as if it had been submerged in a blender on the slow speed.

The appliances in the kitchen all had turned over and were open.

And yet, the sounds we continue to hear is the walking, a little bit of murmuring, but no grief spoken, no anger, no calling of God's name. And then the movie ends. There were no words to convey what I had seen.

And I multiply it by the hundreds of homes each flood event we have experienced. The DVD is evidence of what happened, but the measure of loss of heart break is beyond what I can express.

What this one DVD with **2007 flood** written in black marker did was to remind me of the work we have in front of us. There is injustice and wrongs that must be corrected. Each of the seconds on that DVD were seconds of lives that we cannot re-wind or undo, or re-live.

The brave family who has shared this with us, was not alone in losing home and all that was in it. Too many others have slugged through their yards to open their doors too to see the devastation a flood can leave.

Money will not compensate these losses.

We will speak out- we will holler. We will write letters, cards and wear t-shirts. But with 800 people filling up the Coleman Theatre in February, let's turn on the lights and get your fists in the air and let's say THAT'S IT, WE ARE NOT TAKING THIS ANY-MORE.

We heard few words from that DVD but we watched a town drowning. No one can stop you from speaking out. You will not be silent anymore.

Your Tar Creekkeeper ~ Rebecca Jim

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STARTS WITH YOU

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EPA CLIMATE CHANGE GRANT SUBMITTED: RIVERVIEW PARK AND TALLGRASS PRAIRIE FOR A DIVERSE, INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY—CREATING RESILIENCE IN MIAMI, OK

The months long process of applying for this EPA grant involved developing partnerships in the city, county and directly with the grant writing offered by Anthropocene Alliance as well as from the EPA Community Change Equitable Resilience Technical Assistance from SMM, an architectural firm in New Orleans. Martin Lively took on this effort with the dedication needed to see it to its completion. The Lead Applicant will be the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners with LEAD Agency serving as the Statutory Partner.

This grant focuses on both climate action and pollution reduction strategies. The restoration of the 127-acre Riverview Park will include 48 acres of tallgrass prairie, raingardens, walking and bike trails, disc golf course, earthwork mounds developed with consultation with the Intertribal Council. The restoration of the park will allow nature to fill the space and deal with flooding that is routine.

The 13 Collaborating entities providing community involvement: Intertribal Council, POKI, OSU Extension, Miami Elks Lodge, Euchee Butterfly Farm, Ottawa County Cherokees, the OK Conservation Commission, NEO College, OK Works-Miami, Miami Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Grand Gateway Development Association.

*We need
more
places
where we
can be
together*

*~ Grace
Goodeagle*

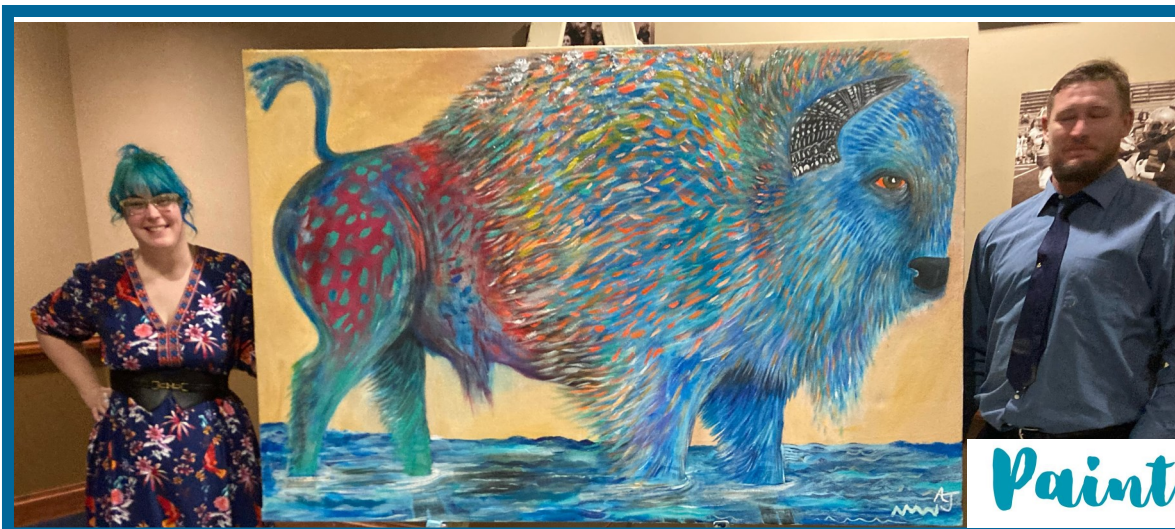
Tallgrass Prairie Trails

RIVERVIEW PARK

SMM



**THEY ALWAYS SAY TIME CHANGES THINGS, BUT YOU ACTUALLY HAVE TO
CHANGE THEM YOURSELF — ANDY WARHOL**



Painting

The Buffalo in Tar Creek was painted by Tulsa Artists Christopher Mantle and Ashley Jayne Dyer during our conference as a LEAD Agency fundraiser. We were so surprised when Grace Goodeagle, LEAD Agency Board Vice-President bought the painting and gifted it to LEAD Agency!

READING THE WORDS FROM THE PAST



On the anniversary of the first investigation of the acid mine water discharging into Tar Creek, the type written report was read aloud in the front room at LEAD Agency. The volumes were for the most part typed on erasable bond paper and collected in the volume chronologically. The accounts of the early days of what would become known as the Tar Creek Superfund site remain stark in the descriptions, noting the discoveries and the persons involved during those early days. The Ottawa County Health Department staff were charged with this effort as they pre-dated the establishment of the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality. We owe much of this early work to **CLYDE MASON**. He transitioned to the ODEQ office which was located in the Miami Post Office until he retired shortly before the county office was closed.

"WE MUST BUILD DIKES OF COURAGE TO HOLD BACK THE FLOOD OF FEAR." MLK JR

LEAD works alongside Climigration Network to support communities facing climate risk

MIAMI, Okla. — After facing decades of toxic flooding in Northeast Oklahoma, Local Environmental Action Demanded (LEAD) Agency, Inc. is collaborating with the Climigration Network to help plan and build a better future for communities that are impacted by climate-related hazards.



The Climigration Network <https://www.climigration.org/> brings together people with lived and learned expertise to advance transformative, community-led approaches to climate displacement and relocation in the United States and its territories. Climigration Network includes a variety of members and partners who aim to build equitable, just, community-driven initiatives to climate migration to support the people most affected by the worsening impacts of climate change.

“Our goal is that everyone who’s in a situation where they are experiencing risk and climate displacement has the opportunity to choose if they would like to move, and if they do choose to move that there’s a supportive system in the United States and locally,” said Kristin Marcell, director of Climigration Network.

Rebecca Jim, executive director of LEAD Agency, is an active member of the Climigration Network’s council and Next Step Cohort. The Next Step Cohort was formed in 2022 to focus on supporting communities facing climate displacement through action, resources and direct investment.

“We’ve created a council that’s community-based leaders, indigenous leaders and policy makers and planners all in the same room making decisions about what this network is,” said Marcell. *“This was a huge accomplishment for us. Now, we’re working on the Next Step Cohort, which was designed for leaders who are facing extreme climate risk and displacement. We have meetings every four to six weeks with a cohort of people who are learning from each other.”*

“The Next Step Cohort has given LEAD Agency the funding to actually mitigate indoor air issues in two homes in this community so far,” Rebecca Jim explained, *“and has connected us with community leaders who are also facing the impacts from climate change, creating in their own way a Cohort of helpers, people we never would have known, who are facing the same challenges, only now we are doing that together.”*

Maggie Osthues, Climigration Network program manager, said members of the Next Step Cohort have built a strong team who can offer first-hand knowledge and strategies for communities facing environmental challenges.

“This program is incredibly focused on peer learning and peer support, participatory grant-making and participatory allocation of resources,” she said. *“It validates how important that learning is across different communities. The role of our network is to elevate and amplify those learnings and help them be applied in other contexts and communities.”*

The Climigration Network partnered with the LEAD Agency in its development of a community-based flood survey that documents responses from Ottawa County homeowners located in the toxic flood zone. Abandoned lead and zinc mines in the region contain toxic heavy metals that are spread to homes, parks, gardens and yards by floodwaters.

LEAD Agency created a community survey that educated residents about the toxic exposure to households and assessed their interest in a home buyout program and other flood prevention projects. Volunteers went door-to-door to neighborhoods in Miami where approximately 450 homeowners participated.

“Our Flood Survey gave people an opportunity to express their opinions but also shocked some when they learned for the first time they too were living in the flood plain and were actually facing the real risk of flooding,” Rebecca Jim stated.

Paul Marquez, a LEAD Agency member who assisted with the flood surveys, brought his own expertise to the table after enduring a flood at his Miami home in 2007. Several days of heavy rain caused the flooding, and Marquez described being up to his knees in water. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared it a disaster area shortly after and offered Marquez a grant to help with the downpayment on a new home.

“I’ve been in earthquakes, tornadoes, ice storms, but flooding is the worst,” said Marquez. *“My flood experience has made me more empathetic and gives me a personal story to share with homeowners, especially those who have moved into the flood zone.”*

Marquez worked on the flood survey with LEAD Agency for more than a year where he visited roughly 1,000 homes in Miami located within the 100-year floodplain. He said the survey was a great learning experience and motivated him to conduct his own research on climate hazards ~ **Submitted by Kimberly Barker**

Climigration

“LIVING IN A HOME WITHOUT A STORM SHELTER CAN BE STRESSFUL”

LEAD AGENCY DESTINATION: NEW ORLEANS

CDC FOUNDATION As required by our contract, both of the funded CDC Foundation staff members attended their NASEM/MACP Convening held in the Ashe Cultural Arts Center in the heart of New Orleans for the 2 day event with many of the attendees staying in the historic Pontchartrain Hotel, just feet from access to the Street Car system that connects much of the city with the city center and the 4th Quarter. **Gina Manders** and **Rebecca Jim** were able to meet the other grantees from the south and the Midwest who are working on climate issues and learn about the projects they are engaged in doing in their communities. As it was a climate centered meeting, held in the heart of hurricane season, our second day was cut short as the participants quickly rescheduled flights to leave before **Hurricane Milton** was on target at that point to hit New Orleans. Leaving we saw the city scrambling to place sand bags and shutter and board up storefront windows.

CLIMIGRATION As a member of the Next Step Cohort, and serving on the Network Council, **Rebecca Jim** attended the combined Climigration Network Council, Workgroup Co-Chairs, and Next Step Cohort meeting from October 28-30 in New Orleans, but held in the outskirts of the city near a Mississippi River levee. The remarkable meeting brought all the Next Step Cohort together with Workgroup and Council members for robust discussions and networking. The group took a site visit to Grand Caillou/Dulac to meet with and on the tribal lands so impacted by climate change. Seeing resilience put to action by the tribal members, rallying for their community was the true meaning of the work Climigration Network is doing. Passing through lands that frequently flood provided many examples of “raised properties” to use as samples we can use locally to allow people to see how others around the nation are dealing with the climate changes already happening.

LEAD AGENCY ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action begins at home and with caring for your self before your neighbors. One of the ways we are recognizing the efforts that have shown community action is through collecting your stories. The University of Oklahoma, through the leadership of **Laurel Smith** in collaboration with LEAD and creator of the project **Moriah Bailey Stephenson**, the Air-Water & Work Oral Histories has begun to flourish. Laurel and her graduate students had conducted the first set of our oral histories with last year’s Mike Synar Awardee **Denny Taylor**, (shown here with his framed award.) What did he do? He and other fishermen for the last 40 years have been advocates for the spoonbill in the Neosho River watershed. He both lives and had worked at the BF Goodrich Plant and took their current owners to court for the exposure to Benzene the plant and their operations had caused to the neighborhood where he lives. **That’s what Community Action Looks Like!**



Thank you

THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE IN THE PROTECTION OF MOTHER EARTH
EARTH FIRST

The Annual Christmas Picher Parade ~ Kimberly Barker

Former Picher residents bring the town to life every December for its annual Christmas parade, which draws hundreds of alumni and their families together for a special celebration. LEAD Agency participated in the 2024 Picher Christmas Parade on Saturday, Dec. 7 where LEAD members decorated vehicles, kayaks and a boat, with festive decorations and signs reading, "Don't Flood Us" and "We need clean water." The LEAD Agency crew wore Santa and elf hats while passing out candy canes and popcorn balls to children in the crowd.

It was a special moment for LEAD members to connect with the Picher community and to put names to faces



Kim Barker, Rebecca Jim, Martin Lively, Paul Marquez, Kim LaForce and her daughter Sarah, with her son, Issac looks on just as the parade ended (not shown were Margie Berk and her mother who took part in LEAD's entry)

with people who appear in surveys, recordings or research. Although the town of Picher is no longer inhabited, the Picher Christmas Parade is a homecoming for a lot of people and an opportunity for them to create new memories with one another. The Picher Gorilla spirit reminds us to have hope in LEAD's vision for a cleaner future and to continue fighting on behalf of those who have experienced environmental injustice.

**All we want for Christmas
is Clean Water
but DON'T FLOOD US!**

OWASSO ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE STUDENTS VISIT

Award winning Owasso Science Teacher **SHANNON CHATWIN** had her environmental science class return to Tar Creek this year and began the day at LEAD Agency. The bright and well informed students lit up the room with ideas and questions and we decided CHANGE certainly could start HERE!



"YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE SILENCED." — JAMES DeVITA

LEAD AGENCY ENCOURAGES YOUTH TO ACTION



MHS Artists Create Tar Creek Species Woodcut Prints

Dawn Hill, MHS Art Instructor dropped by this summer to plan a project for her students to do for this year's Tar Creek Conference. But our front room was full of USGS scientists. They quickly began to name the species that have or can be part of the eco-system at a clean Tar Creek. We took notes and her students' interpretations as woodcuts were on display at the conference. Margie Berk has now made notecards as gifts to future visitors. Each of the students were presented sets of the notecards and t-shirts to show our gratitude for their efforts.

Matt Black, the visiting Magnum Photographer accompanied Rebecca Jim to thank the students but also to present Dawn Hill one of LEAD's first Dr. Nick Calcagno Artist Awards for the years of art her students have created in the effort to promote the clean up of Tar Creek, our environment and to depict the importance of protecting our children from lead poisoning.



*Dawn Hill receives LEAD Agency's Dr. Nick Calcagno Art Award in her classroom at Miami High School
Ron Seat also was selected to receive our Dr. Nick Calcagno Art Award for his continued support*

**DON'T CRITICIZE WHAT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND, YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS
ARE BEYOND YOUR COMMAND - BOB DYLAN**

There are many ways to Help LEAD Agency:



Goodsearch, is a search engine that donates a portion of its advertising revenue to a number of nonprofit organizations and as **goodshop** can save you money, too.

Local Environmental Action Demanded, is on the Goodsearch nonprofits list.

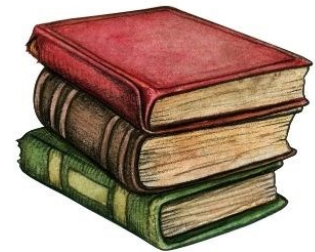
To Help LEAD receive donations, visit the Goodsearch website to create an account:

<https://www.goodshop.com/nonprofit/local-environmental-action-demanded#>, select our agency as your nonprofit of choice and start browsing and shopping. Goodsearch can be set as your default browser! Remember to use our full name **Local Enviornmental Action Demanded**.

We earn a penny a search! *Suggested by Gina Manders as a quick fundraiser*

Share your "stuff" with us:

We always need books for the Little Free Library, and during the winter, we place warm gloves or caps, or scarfs inside too. Our garden needs more friends almost every season. We always have cat friends, so share your catfood with us, or birdfood for our feeders. Drop by and have coffee, and bring a bag of your favorite coffee to share with us. The other "stuff" you have are your time and your opinions and we would love both!



Share your time with us: Like to read? Come summarize documents
Like to write? Write postcards and letters with your opinions to agencies and people in power
Artistic? We have space to share your talents and items to inspire you to create
Like to clean or organize? Lots on this side of the work needs you and your skills & talents

what else? **Do your Community Service Hours with US!**

Become a Member: submit your membership application!

LEAD AGENCY'S MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2024
PRESENTED AT THE 26TH NATIONAL TAR CREEK CONFERENCE

THE TONY BOOTH SCHOLARSHIP *Presented to Lexi Martin*

THE RITA FRAYSER SCHOLARSHIP *Presented to Maddie Martin*



*LEAD Agency lost
many good friends
this year who stood
and served with us.*

The latest:

Jill Micka.

All will be missed.



Thank you

BREAKING NEWS

Vermont Law and Graduate School's Environmental Advocacy Clinic files amicus brief in D.C. Circuit supporting federal ruling compelling Grand River Dam Authority to acquire interests in lands subject to flooding

SOUTH ROYALTON, Vermont (December 23, 2024) — Vermont Law and Graduate School's Environmental Advocacy Clinic has filed an [amicus brief](#) with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit on behalf of its client, Local Environmental Action Demanded Agency, Inc. (LEAD), a native-led, nonprofit environmental justice organization in northeast Oklahoma. The brief asks the court to uphold federal orders, sought by the City of Miami, that would help protect communities upstream from the Pensacola Dam from the impacts of dangerous flooding events, which the dam makes worse.

"The clinic is proud to help our client LEAD bring to the D.C. Circuit the concerns of northeast Oklahoma communities facing the unjust impacts of toxic flooding. For too long, the Pensacola Dam's operator has tried to evade responsibility for these dangers," Christophe Courchesne, director of the Environmental Advocacy Clinic, said. "The court should affirm FERC's lawful decisions here, which will help upstream communities obtain some measure of accountability and environmental justice."

The brief urges the court to uphold orders of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that would require Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA), the state-controlled entity responsible for the Pensacola Dam, to take accountability for flooding impacts in upstream communities by paying for property rights on lands subject to flooding. These communities include the City of Miami, which brought the case to FERC in 2018.

The dam has played a significant role in exacerbating recent flooding events upstream from the dam along the Grand River and the highly contaminated Tar Creek, one of the country's first Superfund sites — and still one of its most polluted. These events can redistribute toxic sediments and threaten the health and safety of neighboring communities and Tribes, which have experienced harms from toxic pollution originating from long-abandoned lead and zinc mining operations in the area.

GRDA's license for the Pensacola Dam requires it to acquire all property necessary or appropriate for project operations. Miami argued that GRDA has been violating its license for years by failing to acquire approximately 13,000 acres of lands flooded by project operations. After FERC initially sided with the GRDA, the case made its way to the D.C. Circuit in 2021, when the court agreed with the City on several issues and returned the case to FERC for further proceedings. FERC issued a series of orders this year ruling that GRDA needed to comply with these terms of its license. GRDA is now challenging those orders in the current appeal before the D.C. Circuit.

VLGS Environmental Advocacy Clinic Director Christophe Courchesne and Environmental Advocacy Clinic student attorneys Evan Kern, Lauren Carita and Matt Dederer prepared the brief.