

# currents

summer 2010

G R A N D R I V E R D A M A U T H O R I T Y



Moving GRDA towards a brighter future ...

# PRESERVING THE VISION, EVERYDAY



Kevin A. Easley  
Chief Executive Officer  
Grand River Dam Authority

*The more things change, the more they stay the same ....*

It is a common saying, but one that certainly applies to the Grand River Dam Authority and its first 75 years.

When this organization was created in April 1935, GRDA's founding fathers had a bold, yet simple vision: produce reliable, abundant electric power and properly manage the natural resources of the Grand River.

Today, three-quarters of a century later, that vision remains.

Of course, things have changed and our methods are a bit different today. In fact, growth, development and advances in technology have allowed GRDA to achieve the vision in ways never imagined in 1935. After all, in 1940, following construction of Pensacola Dam, the dam's 64 megawatts of electricity were more than enough to achieve the vision. Today, GRDA's total generation capacity is over 1,700 megawatts.

It has taken that kind of growth over the last 75 years to keep up with the electricity needs of GRDA customers. Along the way, the organization's role as an economic development engine for Oklahoma has also been solidified. Not only has low-cost, reliable power made that possible, but so has GRDA's efforts to manage over 70,000 surface acres of water for the state. Today, those waters represent the region's most popular tourism and recreation destination and support a broad tax base for Oklahoma.

So, from electricity production to resource management, the GRDA vision still looks like 1935, even in 2010. However, we do not take that for granted. Everyday, we work to insure that today's changes lead to tomorrow's benefits that reflect yesterday's vision. Everyday, we work to insure that the more GRDA changes, the more its benefits to Oklahoma remain the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin A. Easley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



## ON THE COVER:

An American flag painting adorns the rip rap on the Salina Dike. The dike protects the Town of Salina from the waters of Lake Hudson.

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Remembering Gerald "Buck" Gay ...

# GRDA MOURNS LOSS OF A LEADER

**G**erald "Buck" Gay, a member of the Grand River Dam Authority Board of Directors, passed away in March, after a long and courageous battle with illness.

Gay, whose career in education spanned 34 years, retired in 2000 as the superintendent of the Northeast Technology Center. He joined the GRDA Board in 2005 to serve as the electric cooperative representative. Director Gay also served as a trustee on both the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative and KAMO Power boards.

Director Gay's service to his community covered a broad spectrum; he had served as chairman of the Pryor Area Chamber of Commerce as well as the Oklahoma Council of Vocational Administrators. He was also a past president of the Pryor Rotary Club and a member of the Thunderbird Youth Challenge Board and



Director Gay (right) was very instrumental in GRDA's efforts to purchase the Redbud Plant and was on hand to celebrate the purchase in October 2008 with (from left) GRDA CEO Kevin Easley, and board members David Chernicky and Steve Spears.

Leadership Oklahoma Class 8. He was also very active in Relay For Life. For 35 years, he also volunteered on the ambulance and fire crews for the Tulsa Speedway.

"Director Gay had a vision for this area and was a great partner in trying to make things happen," said GRDA Chief Executive Officer Kevin Easley. "He was a great friend to Northeast Oklahoma and GRDA."



Gerald "Buck" Gay

Among many contributions to GRDA, Gay helped lead the organization through a time of improving financial stability and credit rating upgrades that led to the completion of an historic \$475 million bond issue in 2008. He was also instrumental in GRDA's expansion of its generation resources with the purchase of the Redbud Plant.

Gay's knowledge, experience, friendly nature and warm smile will be missed not only around GRDA, but all around Northeast Oklahoma, where he leaves a positive impact.

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GRDA Industrial Customer spotlight ...

# AT ORCHIDS PAPER, IT'S ABOUT GROWTH

Orchids Paper Products is growing and expanding. The Grand River Dam Authority industrial customer -- located in the MidAmerica Industrial Park (MAIP) -- was the second best publicly traded company in Oklahoma in 2009. The rapid rise from the 25th spot on the distinguished list in just four short years is reflective of the organization's energy and strong leadership, and mirrors their ultimate goal.



“Our company is about growth,” said Robert Snyder, president and CEO. “We are utilizing more and more of our assets and meeting our goals.”

Although rooted in MAIP soil since 1978, (originally called Belco and Robel), new life was breathed into the site in 1998 when Orchids was reformed. Since that time, the organization has consistently made decisions and improvements that have positioned the company to achieve the objective of being the supplier of choice for private label tissue products.

Operating 24/7 and using pre-consumer recyclable

fiber, Orchids produces massive parent rolls of bulk paper, each weighing up to three tons, which are converted into private label bathroom tissue, paper towels and napkins. The company's growth has paralleled the growth of the private label brands that are competing very effectively against national brands. Consumers continue to appreciate the quality and value of private label products.

“By keeping the costs low, we are able to offer an affordable product,” Snyder said.

The long-term partnership between Orchids and GRDA plays an important part in keeping the costs low. GRDA has been the wholesale electric provider for Orchids for over 20 years.

“We appreciate GRDA and the things they have done,” Snyder continued. “We think they do a great job. The cost of energy is big for us, and the availability of low-cost power has given us the opportunity to expand.”

Orchids is making the most out of the opportunity; expansion has been constant since going public in 2005. A new paper machine, representing a \$35 million dollar investment, was introduced in 2006. The machine has an annual capacity of approximately 33,000

...It's never “if we can” but “when do you need it done.”

tons, and when combined with the capacity of their older machines, the total capacity is approximately 56,000 tons a

year. According to company information, paper comes off the new machine at 70 miles per hour and it will produce over 500,000 miles of 102 inch wide tissue paper each year, enough to wrap the earth 20 times. This purchase, installed across the street from the converting plant, made it possible for the company to produce all their own paper instead of purchasing any on the open market. For the time being, they are selling any excess parent rolls on the open market.

“Making our own paper equals savings which makes us more competitive,” said Snyder. “We want to sell more finished goods versus parent rolls but as long as we have excess parent roll capacity we will sell on the open market.”

The converting plant contains ten converting lines, which can produce over 8 million cases of finished product. In 2008 and 2009, the company focused on optimizing the utilization of their converting assets. In March of 2009, a \$4.7 million automation project was completed, which included the addition of robotics in the packaging and casing area. They also completed a towel flexibility project which provided greater schedule flexibility among the three existing towel lines; thereby improving customer service performance.

In the latter half of 2009, the company began construction on a new finished goods warehouse. The additional 245,000 square foot

warehouse will allow them to store and ship all products from their MAIP location. This warehouse was completed on July 15th, 2010. The company also purchased a state of the art converting line which will add four million cases to their existing eight million case capacity. This new line was handed over to operations at the first of July. The two projects combined represent a \$27 million dollar investment into the facility.

GRDA has lent a hand during the construction work, by raising adjacent power lines to provide clearance during the building of the warehouse.

“I have worked with a lot of providers across the country and GRDA is good to work with,” said Lonnie Harper, Director of Engineering



Above: An aerial view of Orchids. The new warehouse addition is located in the upper left hand corner.

Opposite page: Robotics are used to help package and store product inside Orchids facility.

and Reliability. “I have had to call on them and we have always gotten a quick and positive response. It’s never “if we can” but “when do you need it done.”

While the expansion investments are impressive and great for the local economy, Orchids’ commitment to investing is not limited to buildings and machines, but also includes people, relationships and community.

Employing nearly 300, Orchids is proud of their personnel and demonstrates that pride by investing in continued training for its workers.

“We have an engaged workforce,” said Snyder. “As the level of technology continues to rise, our training is becoming more intense. There has been a positive reception by the employees.”

The company culture, which encourages employee input, is another source of pride for Snyder, who describes it as “an open climate with the right leadership.”

Keith Schroeder, Chief Financial Officer, agrees with Snyder and believes that the employees are just one of the reasons MAIP is such a great site.

“It’s a good site with a great workforce,” he said. “We have access to low cost energy, lower freight costs to our customers in the target area and this is a growing part of the country. Texas is exceeding the national growth rate now. There are a lot of opportunities in this area. It is the right place, right product, right people and the right time.”



Some of the “Made in Oklahoma” products manufactured by Orchids.

Participating in the Made in Oklahoma (MIO) program is a great way for the company to give back. Promoting brand awareness and consumer loyalty for Oklahoma products is the mission of the MIO Coalition, but the partnership with Orchids has produced much more.

Orchids introduced MIO Paper Towels in May of 2009. Proceeds from the sale of the paper towels support the Food 4 Kids Backpack Program. The program is a school based program that provides weekly backpacks filled with food to at-risk children. According to the website, the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma oversees the more than 10,000 backpacks of food that are provided to children each week. The statistics are startling; one in every five children in Oklahoma is at risk of going to bed hungry. The more MIO Paper Towels purchased, the more children benefit.

Meeting goals is admirable in any company, but when a company’s goals are so high and benefit so many, it is exciting to see the goals attained.

“We think GRDA does a great job, it helps us to grow our company, which means keeping jobs in Oklahoma.” said Snyder.

# IT'S "ALL IN A DAY'S WORK" FOR PMD

For the Grand River Dam Authority's Properties Maintenance Department (PMD), the phrase "all in a day's work" can mean anything. Anything, that is, from fixing a leaky faucet to pouring concrete or beginning new construction. On any given day, the six member crew, led by 19-year GRDA veteran J.D. Couch, is busy building, remodeling, maintaining or repairing the Authority's facilities, inside and out.

"We started out doing mostly building maintenance," said Couch, the soft spoken superintendent, who joined the PMD not long after the department was formed in the mid-1980s. "But now what we do is changing and growing as we take on larger and larger projects."

**"...it is the contribution of the other departments that allows us to do what we can do..."**

The department's focus, originally on building maintenance, quickly expanded to include building cabinetry and even office furniture for GRDA facilities. Of course, creating the duplicate style of millwork was not a problem, since that initial staff was made up of mostly finish carpenters. However, as the workload continued to expand, so did the crew's skill level.

has worked in the carpentry field since he was a 15 year old student at Pryor High School.

Still, he is quick to point out the results his department has been able to achieve are the product of cooperation between several GRDA departments.

"We have the ability to do the work, but it is the contribution of the other departments that allows us to do what we can do. All the departments are quick to give us a hand; we couldn't do it without them," he said. "The cooperation is really a team effort and that is what it takes."

The GRDA Highway 412 substation is a great example of that type of teamwork. The December 2007 ice storm coated much of Northeast Oklahoma with two inches of ice and left thousands in the dark. It also completely devastated the substation, not to mention nearly 15 miles of electric transmission lines leading to the site.

However, GRDA crews from several departments were on site as soon as possible and began putting together a plan to rebuild. Once the site

Left: Gary Beasley carries lumber to the worksite.

Right: PMD's James Henson, Josh Bible and JW Walsh (top) work on concrete forms for a project near the GRDA Coal Fired Complex. From concrete to cabinetry, the PMD crew handles a wide range of construction duties for GRDA.



Currently, PMD has the carpentry skills and expertise, but also possess an even more diverse background that includes commercial construction, industrial maintenance, welding and concrete work. Couch said that collective experience has impacted the range as well the size of the projects. It also translates into savings for GRDA, as the crew is able to reduce the number of outside contractors needed. In the end, time, as well as money is saved.

"I hope what we're doing is allowing GRDA to make progress on projects faster than if the job had to be contracted," said Couch, who

was clean, the PMD crew began building transformer pad forms and pouring concrete.

Of course, previous experience at that same location was a big help; the crew had actually been part of the overall workforce that built the substation in 2001. They poured the original concrete work, said Couch, which included piers, concrete pads for transformers and even containment pits in case of an oil spill.

“We were able to go almost immediately and start rebuilding, which prevented delays,” recalled Couch.

Working in and on all of GRDA facilities has given Couch a unique perspective on the growth of the Authority and public power. One of the first projects he was involved in was the remodel of the GRDA Energy Control Center. The PMD crew completely gutted the old control room in 1991. Since that initial tear out, Couch and the crew have been part of four other remodels at the facility that is now going through a total rebuild.

“I have seen a lot of changes in a relatively short period of time. It has been good to be a part of the process and to see the Authority move ahead and expand their efforts,” he said.

The PMD has certainly played an active role in the growth process. The crew’s fingerprints can be seen on existing facilities and new ones.



This building, home to GRDA’s Cushing Line Crew, was constructed by the PMD.



All the tables, cabinetry and woodwork in the GRDA board room were constructed in-house, by the PMD.

Customized buildings are also on the crew’s impressive and ever growing resume. When the GRDA Coal Fired Complex needed a building to house some laboratory equipment last spring, PMD constructed it in their shop at GRDA’s Transmission and Engineering Headquarters. Once the cabinet was in place, the crew hauled it to the site and completed the project in less than three hours.

“We work hard, we like our job and we like to do it right,” said Couch of his relatively young crew. “The guys take full responsibility for each project and take care of it. When it comes together there is a real sense of accomplishment.”

The sheer variety of work keeps things interesting, but the crew must remain flexible because days may be planned and projects scheduled, but they know that all of that can change in an instant. While larger projects are becoming more common, building maintenance is still priority and Couch knows first hand that when you do maintenance work, it is subject to change and change quick. In the end, his days are determined by need, and he and his crew receive a lot of satisfaction in seeing those needs met.

“Generally, we can manage to do just about everything that comes our way. We have a well-rounded crew and we enjoy the challenge,” said Couch.

Celebrating the GRDA Vision ...

# A GRAND OPENING, AN HISTORIC CELEBRATION

For the Grand River Dam Authority, Thursday, April 29, 2010 was a day to celebrate yesterday's achievements and tomorrow's potential.

It all took place at the new GRDA Ecosystems and Education Center, adjacent to historic Pensacola Dam, on the shores of Grand Lake. With a large crowd on hand, GRDA officially opened the doors of the new building during a special "Grand Opening" event held in conjunction with the Authority's 75th anniversary.

GRDA Chief Executive Officer Kevin Easley welcomed the crowd and reminded them of the impact that GRDA has had on the region, going all the way back to 1940, when the Authority first harnessed the waters of the Grand River to make electricity. In honoring GRDA's founding fathers, he also recalled their vision for seeing low-cost, abundant electricity made possible from the river waters.

"Now think about that for a minute, these same [water] molecules that come in from Kansas, we use them at Pensacola to generate, then they go on down the river and we generate with them at Lake Hudson," said Easley. "Then the same molecules are used to generate at the Salina Pumped Storage Project, then ultimately are used to generate again at Fort Gibson. Think about having that vision... it's a huge vision."

**"Think about having that vision...  
it's a huge vision."**

During the event, GRDA honored two people who were very important in leadership positions with the Authority and were also very instrumental in seeing the new building become a reality.

GRDA presented a plaque of recognition to Sharron Gay, wife of the late Buck Gay, a former member of the GRDA Board of Directors. Gay was also a member of the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative and was actively involved in many other organizations in the area.

The late Barbara Conner, who was the first woman to sit on the GRDA Board of Directors, was also honored during the grand opening ceremony. Conner had been the longtime president of the South Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce, and for many years was a driving force in the effort to construct a new visitors' center on the south end of Grand Lake.

Finally, as part of the special ceremony, the audience had a chance to see the debut of a new video detailing GRDA history, especially the construction of Pensacola Dam, Oklahoma's oldest hydroelectric facility. That video now plays in the visitors' theater at the new Ecosystems and Education Center.

For more information on the GRDA Ecosystems and Education Center, visit [www.grda.com](http://www.grda.com).

**Editor's Note:** Look for a special historical retrospective on GRDA's first 75 years in an upcoming edition of the Currents.





GRAND OPENING SCENES ... (Top left) Sharron Gay (center) wife of the late Buck Gay, a former GRDA Director, accepts a plaque from GRDA Chief Executive Officer Kevin Easley, in recognition of Mr. Gay's years of service to GRDA, while Robert Echenrode, general manager of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative (NEOREC) looks on. Mr. Gay was also a NEOREC trustee. (Top right) GRDA Summer Tour Guide Pat Hopper shows the plaque presented in memory of her friend, the late Barbara Conner. Former director of the South Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce, Conner was the first women to serve on the GRDA Board of Directors and was a driving force behind the effort to construct the new building. (Above right) With the help of a GRDA bucket truck, all the participants at the Grand Opening/GRDA 75th Celebration took part in this group shot. (Above left) GRDA Properties Coordinator Mary Edmundson poses with GRDA's 75th birthday cake.

New video focuses on benefits of GRDA's facility ...

# GRDA CFC Now In HD



Lights, camera, action . . .

That was theme around the Grand River Dam Authority Coal Fired Complex (CFC) in late spring as the GRDA Corporate Communications Department shot footage and interviews for a new video focused on the facility.

Now complete, this modern high definition (HD) video gives its viewers a look at the inner workings of the CFC. From the coal yard and the laboratory, to the control room and the turbine deck, the video goes inside the generation facility and tells the story using interviews with actual employees.

GRDA began construction on the two unit thermal generation facility in the late 1970s. CFC's Unit 1 began commercial operations in 1982; Unit 2 followed in 1985. When those units went online, it nearly tripled GRDA's total electric generation capability while transforming GRDA from a small Northeast Oklahoma hydroelectricity producer, to a major electricity supplier for the region. Today, the CFC remains the Authority's primary generation source and employs a workforce of approximately 200.

This new video was produced entirely in-house and replaces a previous version created with assistance from an outside production company several years ago. While it will be viewed primarily by groups at the facility, GRDA will also make the new video available for civic meetings, classroom presentations and other venues.

"We wanted something that would give tour groups a synopsis of the facility as an introduction prior to a tour," said GRDA Assistant Media Services Superintendent Melanie Earl, who shot and edited the video. "However, we structured it so it would work as a stand alone presentation."

According to GRDA Assistant General Manager of Thermal Generation Charles Barney, the video is part of a new effort to better inform the public about GRDA and the important mission it serves for Oklahomans.

**"...the best way to tell the CFC story was through the words and experiences of its dedicated employees..."**

"The new video has seven key elements", said Barney. "Certainly we explain how this facility works, but the effort goes well beyond that." Other elements include explaining GRDA's mission; how the facility "generates" jobs for Oklahoma; how coal is American energy at reasonable cost; how GRDA serves its communities; facility history; and stewardship of the environment.

Earlier this year, the CFC lobby also received a face-lift, and now contains a series of informative display panels that covers these subject areas.

"I felt the best way to tell the CFC story was through the words and experiences of its dedicated employees," said Earl. "So many employees are featured, talking about their responsibilities, and how those tasks contribute to the overall GRDA mission."

Those interested in viewing the new video, or other special GRDA presentations, can contact GRDA Corporate Communications at (918) 256 5545.



With the CFC reception area as a backdrop, Assistant Superintendent of Media Services Melanie Earl films an interview with CFC Plant Superintendent Dan Hudnall for the new facility video.

# REPRESENTING GRDA AT GLA ...



Lori Starks, GRDA's Programs and Lake Relations Coordinator.

Lori Starks, Grand River Dam Authority Programs and Lake Relations Coordinator, is a new member of the Grand Lake Association (GLA) Board of Directors. Starks joined the board in mid July.

Starks worked as a GRDA programmer for 20 years before being recruited to work in the Authority's Community Relations Department in 2006. Since that time, she has been involved in many lake related initiatives including the development of a GRDA lakes area stakeholder database and the Grand Lake Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) meetings. She has also coordinated various GRDA lake related campaigns including the Kyle Williams Boating Safety Classes; Rush for Brush; I Got Caught Wearing My Life Jacket; monthly shoreline cleanup projects; the GRDA and Grand Lake Sail & Power Squadron's Annual Shoreline Cleanup and the grand opening of the new GRDA Ecosystems & Education Center in April 2010.

In December of 2009, Starks was promoted to her current position. Since that time she has been an active participant in lake area chambers and associations.

The Grand Lake Association was formed to further the individual and common interests of its members and all the people residing or working in the Grand Lake area.

New night time speed limit is most notable change ...

## NEW LAKE RULES IN EFFECT

The Grand River Dam Authority is announcing that the new and revised lake rules and regulations for Grand and Hudson Lakes are in effect, as of June 25. After a public comment period early this year, the GRDA Board of Directors approved the new rules, which were then approved by the Oklahoma Legislature and Governor Brad Henry. They do carry the force and effect of law.

While hardcopies of the rules will soon be available to the public at various locations around Grand and Hudson Lakes, the public can now view the rules online at [grda.com](http://grda.com). Just follow the "Lake Rules" link under the "Lake Management" dropdown menu on the homepage.

While the most significant revisions are related to the new GRDA Ecosystems and Education Center (as the location for all lake permitting), there is one significant revision under the "boater safety" section of the rules. The new "night speed limit" rule reads as follows: "It shall be unlawful for any person to operate any vessel upon the waters of GRDA, between the hours of one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise at any speed in excess of twenty-five (25) miles per hour."

The former night speed limit was 35 MPH.

For more information on the lake rules or other lake or boating issues, contact GRDA at (918) 782 4726.



GRDA Police Officer Jason Littlefield (right) visits with Grand Lake boaters.

**GRDA Customer Conference**  
**October 6-7, 2010**

Renaissance Hotel & Convention Center  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Customers will be receiving the conference registration,  
accommodations and agenda information in September.

***So, mark your calendars!***



For more information email Laura Townsend at  
ltschuchman@grda.com or call 918-256-0742.



# Looking to the Future, Celebrating the Past



226 W Dwain Willis Ave

PO Box 409

Vinita, OK 74301-0409

918-256-5545

[www.grda.com](http://www.grda.com)

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