



Kansas Highlights

December 2001

FAREWELL FROM KANSAS' STATE CONSERVATIONIST

As we enjoy the holiday period, spend it with family and enjoy what blessings you have. Please take advantage of the time spent with your loved ones. That action is very important in life's scheme.

In regard to the NRCS family, I want to thank you for all your efforts in promoting and getting conservation on the ground on Kansas's private lands. Your good work continues to shine as we move forward with a new farm bill. You are a part of an agency that is second to none in credibility, respect, and approval. If you have not realized this, it is very true. The recently released American Customer Satisfaction Index only affirms the above statement. You and your peers within the agency should be very proud of the accolades given to you in that study.

However, I did not need a study to let me know this about you. You have performed marvelously during my tenure here. We have gone the full gamut on issues from service centers to conservation planning with the Customer Service Toolkit. Through it all, you have demonstrated a professional and "can do" attitude that I have thoroughly appreciated. Even though one never fully realizes the long-lasting impact one has with people through interaction, you can be assured that you have left a permanent heartfelt mark in my heart. I can honestly say that Kansas will forever be in my blood. I will miss this wonderful state and you, the NRCS family.

Best wishes my friends,

EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER AWARDS FOR 2001

The Earth Team Volunteer Program had a good year in Kansas. There were increased hours and number of offices with volunteers. This year, Kansas had numerous nominations for the Earth Team Volunteer Program awards.

This year's *Individual Kansas Earth Team Volunteer Award* winner is Roxann Schreiner from the Wichita Field Office. Roxann has been a valuable asset to the field office for the last three years. She has been involved in many projects that have assisted the field office in accomplishing their mission. She has inventoried waterways built since 1990 and compiled data into a spreadsheet. Roxann has updated and maintained a CRP ledger and maps for active CRP contracts. The historical aerial photography from 1938 and 1950 were organized and keyed so that they can be located easily. She organized and keyed Farm Service Agency's (FSA) slides. Roxann has been involved in environmental education, and in organizing publications for the office.

The *Chief's Field Office Award* went to the Fredonia Field Office. The Earth Team Volunteer Program has become the most widely recognized volunteer group in the area. Through an aggressive recruiting program, the field office has been able to enroll numerous volunteers to help with activities in the community. Volunteers have assisted the field office in conservation planning and layout of projects.

They have assisted in educational opportunities, such as the sixth grade Conservation Field Day, plant identification programs, water festival, Wildlife Tree Party, and other educational activities. The office has used the volunteer program to accomplish many jobs that could not be accomplished with the present staff.

The *NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award* went to the Jefferson County Conservation District and the Oskaloosa Field Office. They have used a strong and varied recruiting program to acquire volunteers to assist them in accomplishing their goals. They have both individual and group volunteers who assist in conservation education, conservation projects, and demonstrations. They have been involved in activities such as Up, Up and Away with Arbor Day, Eagle Mania, and environmental festivals. They have used volunteers to plant trees on riparian buffer areas. They use volunteers to assist with demonstrations on new conservation practices.

The *Group Earth Team Award* went to the Volunteer Connection of the Salina's Retired Senior Volunteer Program. They have provided an easy access for quality volunteers to assist the State Office in accomplishing tasks and activities. This has freed up staff to do other jobs. The people that volunteer are of high quality and interested in the jobs they have been assisting on. One of the accomplishments was a man who found lumber and other supplies to build birdhouses to give away at the farm show. Other volunteers assist in office tasks, such as, filing, typing labels, addressing and mailing newsletters, tabulating information, and assembling packets.

The *NRCS Earth Team Employee Award* went to Mary Shaffer. Mary has been the State Office Volunteer Coordinator for three years. When she took over, there were only a few volunteers at the office. Most of these were retired employees. Mary contacted many sources to find quality volunteers. She also worked with staff members to encourage use of volunteers to accomplish many of the tasks in the state office. With her direction, the state office has used a number of volunteers in a variety of ways. Mary is also the national NRCS Employee Award winner.

Kansas forwarded five nominations for consideration for national recognition. Of these, three are national winners. It is believed this is an unprecedented accomplishment, three national awards from one state!

Congratulations to all! *Submitted by Lonnie Miller, Soil Scientist, Salina SO*

NRCS NEW MISSION STATEMENT

A recent review of several of NRCS's electronic and print documents revealed that a number of different versions of the NRCS mission statement are being used. It is important that the Agency present a consistent image internally, to our partners, and to the public. For this reason, the Chief's Executive Team and the regional conservationists reviewed the various mission statements and recommended the following wording to the Chief for inclusion as the official mission statement. See General Manual (GM) Title 130, Part 400.1:

"The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment."

Please be sure to use this wording wherever the NRCS mission statement appears.

WETLANDS EXPLODE FOR WILDLIFE

Developing and enhancing wetland areas present challenges at times. A wetland site in Clay County is no exception. This wetland is enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program and enhancement activities are part of the plan of operation.

Due to the presence of gypsum in the soil at this particular wetland site, the use of heavy equipment for excavation was unlikely to be an option. The seep area usually has water at the surface most of the year. Studies identify shallow water wetland development techniques could be accomplished with the use of explosives.

Mike McFadden, Biologist, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), made the arrangements to secure explosive materials and enlisted the help from Slurry Explosives Corporation. The project was both experimental to see if shallow water areas could be established with this technique, and doubled as a training opportunity for personnel from KDWP and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The day started with safety training by a representative with Slurry Explosives. Afterwards, time was spent getting the site ready for the explosion. A recipe was followed instructing three 12-inch diameter holes dug in a triangular arrangement approximately 20 feet apart and 4 feet deep. All three holes were wired together and detonated from, 300-to-400 feet away.



According to Lynn Thurlow, District Conservationist, this technique worked well at this site. Soil was rocketed 300 feet into the air. The resulting crater measured 33 feet in diameter and 9 feet deep. The cost for materials for a hole this size was \$70.

Thurlow further explained that after looking at the results from a day of exploding these wetlands, additional opportunities may exist for using this technique around the state. *Submitted by Lynn Thurlow, District Conservationist, Clay Center FO, 785-632-2215*

PLANTING TREES BY THE BUSHEL

The Douglas County Conservation District, NRCS, Kansas Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service hosted a Direct Seeding Workshop in November. John Olds, Forestry Consultant from One-Stop Forestry, Iowa, conducted the workshop. Over 75 interested natural resource professionals, farmers, and landowners attended the workshop.

Direct seeding is the process of establishing a stand of trees by planting tree seed instead of the conventional tree seedlings. Direct seeding has several advantages over conventional tree planting. The seed is hand seeded so the area will have a more natural appearance, and more trees per acre can be established resulting in tree growth sooner. This minimizes the amount of mowing and herbicide needed for maintenance. Direct seeding mimics what it takes nature to accomplish in thousands of years. It's hard to argue with the success of Mother Nature.

The morning of the workshop consisted of classroom sessions dealing with: seed needed, seed collection and storage, site preparation, planting, weed and grass control, costs, and maintenance. The afternoon sessions consisted of direct seeding 4-and 5-acre Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) riparian buffer sites. Both sites are located west of Lawrence and will be monitored the next several years to watch the progress of the direct seeding. *Submitted by Clyde Mermis, District Conservationist, Lawrence FO, 785-843-4288*

CONSERVATION PLANNING TRAINING

For those NRCS employees who don't get to see "conservation on the land" first hand, they now have a better idea thanks to a recent training session. Approximately 30 employees from the State Office's Personnel, Financial Management, Information Technology, Data Management, and Administrative staffs attended a full day session. Tomas



Dominguez, State Conservationist, welcomed the group. Ken Sherraden, Biologist, presented an informative power point presentation on the nine steps of conservation planning. In the afternoon, Kenny Bowell, District Conservationist, Saline County, showed the group various conservation practices. These included terraces, buffer strips, and tree projects throughout the county. *Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO*

NRCS ADOPTS NEW AGENCY SYMBOL

Did you notice our new logo on the front page? Recently, NRCS adopted a "new" symbol by returning to the familiar raindrop and contour. This graphic, along with the agency initials and name, make up the new official NRCS symbol, replacing the USDA/NRCS logo in use since 1994. In bringing back the raindrop graphic, the agency is underscoring its commitment to conservation and acknowledging a long tradition of effective communication with its customers. The blue raindrop symbolizes both the purity and the power of natural forces that shape the land. The contour symbolizes both landform and vegetation tools used in conservation to capture the benefits of nature and protect the land. The modern typestyle of the initials for our agency's name reflects our use of the latest scientific knowledge in our conservation practices. The State Office is working on developing a standard for using this logo on letterheads, bulletins, and other uses. *For more information, contact Mary Shaffer, Public Affairs Specialist, Salina SO at 785-823-4571 or email mary.shaffer@ks.nrcs.usda.gov*

HEROES AND HELPERS

Jodi Cushenbery, District Conservationist, Independence, with collateral duties as Kansas Federal Women's Program Manager, was in San Antonio, Texas, on September 11. She was attending "Managing a Special Emphasis Program" training session. Considering the tragic events at the World Trade Center that morning, the class was dismissed until 1:00 p.m. She and three classmates went to the South Texas Blood and Tissue Center to give blood, only to find out that the waiting time was four hours. They returned to the training but returned that evening to the Center to even longer lines. Wanting to volunteer in some way, they helped serve food and drinks, pick up trash, and watch children whose parents were giving blood. Jodi said more than 1,200 people were on hand to give blood, but when President Bush talked to the nation that night, there was complete silence. "I never felt more American," said Jodi. "It was awesome." Recently, to Jodi's surprise, she received a certificate of Outstanding Community Service from the South Texas Blood and Tissue Center. *Submitted by Mary Shaffer, Public Affairs Specialist, Salina SO*

WHO SAYS, "YOU CAN'T TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS?"

Area 1 is now on the cutting edge of technology. In November, the Area 1 Public Information Committee held an Information Exposition at the Ellis County Fairgrounds in Hays, Kansas. Over 50 Area 1 personnel were in attendance. Students from the Hays High School (HHH) Web-Team instructed the group on purchasing and using a digital camera along with putting together a Power-Point presentation. The group gained valuable knowledge of today's modern technology and in just a few hours of one-on-one training, they were putting on their own presentations.

Other information and exhibitors presented during the exposition included awareness of meth labs, State Association of RC&D Councils, Working with Downing Boards, Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Exhibit, Grazing Lands Coalition, Recycling and Composting, and Solar Power Energy. *Submitted by Jan Klaus, Office Assistant, Hays AO*



NRCS Employees Andy Phelps and Ted Houser (standing) listen carefully to a HHS Student Instructor at the Area 1 Exposition

WATER FESTIVAL...A BIG SPLASH!

A big splash was made at Garfield Park in late September, as 788 fourth graders participated in Topeka's second annual Water Festival. The Kansas Association of Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) again partnered with the Shawnee County Conservation District, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, The Perrier Group, and other major sponsors to make the event possible.

Eighteen exhibitors filled the gymnasium with demonstrations, while 14 other stations involved students in hands-on activities. Putting kids inside huge bubbles and giving free bottled water were popular stations in the exhibit area. Fun, educational activities included water races, a water play, creating landfills with household products, designing a river with real river mud, and a water jeopardy game.



Students learned about buoyancy, streambank stabilization, the earth's usable water supply, watersheds, wetlands, the movement of water, and much more. Thanks to Diane Maddox and Laura Downey with KACEE for another successful event! *Submitted by Judy Carls, District Manager, Topeka FO*

LET'S MEET...

Dan Curtis is the new coordinator of the newly authorized Central Prairie RC&D. Dan came to Kansas from Alabama. He has been employed by NRCS for 21 years. He began his career as a soil conservation technician, a position he held for 9 years, then spent a year as a soil conservationist, and for the last 11 years he was a district conservationist.

Dan was heavily involved with volunteers and the Earth Team in Alabama. He recruited, trained, and supervised over 900 ET volunteers in four counties who contributed over 60,000 hours. Two counties he worked in won the NACD/SCS Earth Team of the Year award.

In addition to his NRCS career, Dan has also been a combat engineer in the Army Reserve for 11 years. He has been decorated 13 times for his efforts with the Reserve including being named "Engineering Soldier of the Year in 1996," the first reservist to earn this United Nations Award. He said, "I am deeply committed to the protection and enhancement of our natural resources, the protection of our country and environment for the benefit of our children." *Article Submitted by Terry Alstatt, Area 3 Public Affairs Chairman*



Dan Curtis, Central Prairie
RC&D Coordinator

NRCS AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES DO A GOOD JOB!

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) shows that farmers and ranchers are happy with the conservation technical assistance (CTA) they get from the NRCS and conservation districts.

CTA received a satisfaction index of 81 out of a possible 100. This is 10 points higher than Americans rate private sector services and 12 points higher than the index for Federal government services. CTA received a trust index of 90 out of a possible 100.

"NRCS and conservation district employees can be proud of the job they are doing in serving our customers. However, along with the public trust comes added responsibility. Our customers expect good service from us— so we face the challenge of living up to their expectations in the future," said Pearlle Reed, Chief NRCS.



More information on the ACSI is available on the NRCS web site at <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/CCS/satisfaction.html>.

AREA 2 CATTLEMEN'S "COFFEE-SHOP" MEETING DATES

Each of the meetings is scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m., Wilmore Community Building, Wilmore, Kansas.

February 5 – "Planning for Profit" – Dr. Harlan Hughes

February 14 – "Using the Ranch to Revitalize Rural Communities" – Wade Robertson,
John Miller, and Ramelle Farrar

February 21 – "The Nuts & Bolts of Restoring the Native Range" – Kirk Gadzia

February 28 – "Restoring the Native Range – A Rancher's Perspective" – Roger Bowe

Sponsors include: Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition, Comanche Pool Prairie Resource Foundation, Comanche County Extension Council, Comanche County Conservation District, Sunflower Range, Forage and Livestock Council. *For more information on these meetings, contact Loren Graff, District Conservationist, 620-582-2211*

SOIL GUYS

Soil Scientists Chad Remley, Salina, and John Warner, Hutchinson, a.k.a. Soil Guys, realize that learning about soil is not as exciting as say Harry Potter. However, they want students to realize the value of the soil that grows their food. Remley and Warner offered several examples of how to visually present soils in the classroom for grades kindergarten through 6th grade at the 2001 Environmental Educators Conference held in Great Bend in November. They used candy bars, balloons, Rice Krispies, and a frosted cake to give some pizzazz to teaching soils. Educators attending the session learned how soils mature, how water moves through soil, and how residue keeps soil in place. The Kansas Association of Conservation and Environmental Educators (KACEE) sponsors the conference. *Submitted by Mary Shaffer, Public Affairs Specialist, Salina SO*

KUDOS!

Good job to Area 3 for receiving the 2001 "Up and Beyond" Apprentice traveling plaque. This plaque is awarded every year to an area for having the most apprentices. Area 3 field offices receiving Up and Beyond paperweights were Kingman, Lyons, Anthony, and the Harper RC&D. There were eleven apprentices across the state learning about NRCS this past year.

Congratulation to Charles Atkinson, Soil Conservationist, Great Bend, and his wife, Inga, for receiving the Young Leader Award sponsored by the Kansas Soybean Association. Atkinson will travel to Nashville at the end of February for a week of leadership training as well as to attend the National Soybean Commodity Classic.

UPCOMING CONSERVATION EVENTS

January 7 – 8, 2002 – The Farmers Agriculture, Conservation and Technology (The F.A.C.T.) Conference, Liberal, Kansas

January 21 – 22 – No-Till on the Plains Conference, BiCentennial Center, Salina, Kansas

♦ Kansas Highlights is issued BI-monthly. For more information on how to submit a story, comments about Kansas Highlights, contact Sheila Forrester, NRCS Visual Information Specialist, at 785-823-4572, or at sheila.forrester@ks.nrcs.usda.gov.

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*Onward over the white blanket we urged our trotting mare,
Her bells jingling merrily in the crisp December air.
Our destination was the cabin in the clearing--we could see it at last
And a multitude of memories flooded back from the past.
Cups of cocoa and long talks huddled round a dancing flame,
Times of laughter and of sharing seem to always be the same.
We wish you much warmth and joy at this special time of year
And pray the days to come embrace you with all you hold dear.*

The Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Office Employees' Association