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Dust Storm Hits Drought-Plagued Kansas

Although rains have brought some limited relief to western Kansas, last May residents of the Great Plains were reminded of scenes from the Dirty Thirties and the power Mother Nature wields. According to the June newsletter of USDA's Farm Service Agency, the National Weather Service (NWS) reported a wall cloud entered Sherman County at 5:30 p.m. May 29, with wind speeds of 69 mph with gusts to 85 mph.

The wall cloud reached Graham County at 6:29 p.m. traveling 84 miles in one hour. When the wall cloud reached Phillips and Smith counties, it had winds of 100 to 110 mph, damaging buildings and trees. The dirt cloud traveled nearly to the middle of the state before dissipating. Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO



Dust storms unlike any seen since the Dirty Thirties hit drought-plagued northwest Kansas on May 29, creating near zero visibility.

Lewis and Clark Activities in Ottawa County

The Ottawa County Conservation District and NRCS assisted the Minneapolis Public Library with their Lewis and Clark themed summer reading program, "Discover New Trails," by providing soil painting information and arranging for several speakers to give demonstrations throughout the summer. The District and NRCS also provided pictures and articles to the local newspapers. Galen Crum, Smolan, spoke to the children about raising cattle and gave a demonstration on why a producer might need to rope a cow. Two lines

were then set up and each child got to experience roping a practice dummy. Karen Proctor, Osage Tribe, and Grandma Belle, Ogallala Sioux, both of Wichita, brought many examples of beadwork, instruments, and clothing used by mid-western tribes for the children to feel, play, and try on. Belle told stories of growing up on a reservation and in a Catholic boarding school. She spent several years as a nanny for the artist who carved Lincoln in Mount Rushmore. Karen told an interactive tale of Lewis and Clark and their encounter with her Great,



Children using soil paint on their pictures.



Soil painting created by a child who attended the Lewis and Clark demonstration.

Lewis and Clark (continued)

Great, Grandfather Chief White Hair. Karen and Grandma Belle taught the children a friendship dance (also known as the rabbit dance). The summer program ended with a two-part finale of

stories and soil painting. The children drew pictures then painted with a choice of five different colors of soil paint. The Library staff sifted and ground the soil and mixed it with a paint medium.

Submitted by Jennifer Cleveland, District Manager, Ottawa County Conservation District

2004 Earth Day Celebration

Nearly 45 Jewell County fifth grade students, with the help of Future Farmers of America (FFA) members, planted over 250 Eastern red cedars. The annual event, held in May is sponsored by the Jewell County Conservation District and NRCS. The hands-on experience is an excellent opportunity to teach students the benefits of conservation practices. The fifth grade students, FFA members, teachers, bus drivers, NRCS, and District staff members met at Paul and Luann Wilson's homestead north of Mankato to plant the trees. Everyone had a

part in the activity. Gary Tordrup, Jewell County Extension Agent, and Mike Waite, District Conservationist, Mankato explained the procedure for the correct way to plant the trees. They also explained the benefits of the windbreak and its location to the house. After observing the district-owned tree planter and weed barrier machine in action, everyone was treated with a soda and candy bar, compliments of Jewell County Farm Bureau Insurance. Prior to the celebration, a drawing was held for Earth Day T-Shirts that

were provided by Non-Point Source funds. Nine lucky students and three teachers were all decked out in Earth Day attire to celebrate the occasion. Learning and fun combined made for a great memory! Submitted by Sheila Diamond, District Manager, Jewell County Conservation District



"The goal of these General information Meetings is to get as much current information out about the program."

During the Conservation Security Program (CSP) training in Minneapolis, Minnesota, held in June, each of the 18 selected watersheds from across the nation announced their timeline for delivery of the "general information meetings" that would be held prior to the July CSP

signup period. Kansas, being in the forefront of many conservation issues going on today, was ahead of the game and had already scheduled the CSP meetings. Terry Hodgson, District Conservationist, Anthony, announced at the 7:30 a.m. June 14, 2004,

Harper County CSP general information meeting, "They had to get up pretty early on the east coast to beat us to the punch on this one." The first meeting held at the Municipal Hall, Anthony, was attended by 59 individuals from many different

Harper County Holds 1st CSP Info Meeting in Nation

sectors of the local community. According to Hodgson, "The goal of these meetings is to get as much current information out about the program and to get the self-assessment workbook into the hands of as many potential

applicants as we can to expedite the application process." Follow-up meetings to these meetings will focus on the completion of the workbooks and scheduling personal interviews to gather further information needed for eligibility.

Submitted by Terry Hodgson, District Conservationist, Anthony FO

PL-566 50th Anniversary Celebration

What better way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of PL-566, the legislation authorizing funding for watershed projects across the nation, than to bring people together for a first-hand look at the benefits watershed district projects can provide. That's exactly what happened on August 4 when 225 people gathered at the East Harvey County Lake recreation area near Newton, itself a PL-566 funded project of the Whitewater River Watershed District, to mark the 50th anniversary of the legislation signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on August 4, 1954. Those present included members of approximately 20 of the state's 85 watershed districts, state legislators and officials, NRCS personnel, representatives of federal legislators, and federal officials, including Mack Gray, USDA Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, who spoke at the barbeque supper. For Gray, who began his career

working on watershed projects with the Soil Conservation Service in Texas, the turnout was encouraging. "It's a tremendous boost to me to see this kind of support for this program," he said. The celebration began with an afternoon bus tour of nearby projects including East Harvey County Lake, a multi-purpose reservoir completed in 1976; Sand Creek Watershed Joint District No. 68 Site1, the cornerstone of the Sand Creek Watershed Plan; Sand Creek Site 107, completed in March 2000; Whitewater Site 15, completed in 1981 and recently undergoing maintenance; and Whitewater Site 17, currently under construction with an estimated completion date of early 2005. During the tour, board members and construction officers associated with each project provided background information, explained construction details, and described mitigation and

conservation work done. Despite the celebratory tone of the event, challenges face the PL-566 program as the federal budget deficit and changing demographics of Congress put pressure on which federal programs get the available dollars. According to Gray, the PL-566 program, with its current fiscal budget allocation of \$80 million, is just getting by. If it is to continue as a viable program, he said, rural areas of the country – including Kansas – have to increase advocacy for the program and sell the country's urban residents on the benefits watershed districts can provide to the nation's citizens through flood control, improved water quality, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and conservation. "I think it's time to do some thinking outside the box in terms of being inventive about what needs to be done and can be done," Gray said in a challenge to those present. "The key is partnerships with state and local governments, outside organizations, and building support with people who live in town."



Those attending PL-566 anniversary celebration enjoy the afternoon tour of highlighted projects.



Sand Creek Site 107 was one of several watershed district projects highlighted on the anniversary tour.

Volunteers Busy in Area 5



Students from the Burlington High School Environmental Club plant trees/shrubs for the city of New Strawn.

Volunteers in Area 5 were busy this spring planting trees at different locations. Students from the 2003-2004 Burlington High School Environmental Club helped plant 600 trees/shrubs for a windbreak in the city of New Strawn, Kansas. Along with the club members, those present were New Strawn city representatives: Mark Petterson, Mayor; Glenda Perkins,

Councilwoman; Ron Parkey, city employee; Nancy Alley, District Manager and Mary Lou Ponder, Coffey County Conservation District; J.D. Corwine, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician. In another planting, 58 students from the Waverly Elementary School and their instructors helped a local landowner, P.C. Moore. The group was invited to his farm and learned about a tree's physical make up,

counted tree rings, worked with various soil types, and gained knowledge about the water cycle. Over 1,000 trees and shrubs were planted. On hand were Ponder; Bob Culbertson, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Biologist, Emporia; Robert Harkrader, NRCS District Conservationist, Burlington.

Submitted by Mary Lou Ponder, Buffer Coordinator, Coffey County Conservation District

Kansas Crossroads RC&D Making Progress

Representatives from Ottawa, Clay, Cloud, Jewell, Washington, Mitchell, Riley, Lincoln, Saline, and Republic counties are involved in forming a new Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) area in north central Kansas. Rod Frack, NRCS District Conservationist in Ottawa County, has been assigned as the Acting RC&D Coordinator for the forming area. A steering committee comprised of members from the participating counties of Jewell, Ottawa, Clay, Cloud,

and Washington has been formed. This committee has chosen the name of Kansas Crossroads RC&D for the new area and is revising the first draft of the by-laws. Once approved, the member counties will form an RC&D Council and file for incorporation and 501c3 tax-exempt status. The steering committee has identified the following potential projects: dry hydrants,

agri-tourism, lake improvements, grant writing workshops, recycling centers, road/recreational improvements, school technology, and riparian area needs.

Submitted by Rod Frack, District Conservationist, Minneapolis FO

NRCSers Cycle Missouri's Katy Trail

On June 19, 2004, three NRCS employees left on an expedition to bike across the state of Missouri via the Katy Trail State Park. The bikers were Arlen Ricke, District Conservationist, Dighton; Leah Ricke, Resource Conservationist, Dodge

City Area Office; and Lori Graff, District Conservationist, Leoti. The Katy was originally the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (MKT or Katy) which was discontinued in 1986. Today, the Katy is the longest continuous trail in the national rails-to-trails system and is used exclusively for bicycling,

walking, and running, although a portion of the trail is open to horseback riding. On Monday, after breakfast, 275 bicyclists took off down the Katy and headed west toward Clinton, Missouri, 225 miles away. During the ride, rain showers plagued bikers

Katy Trail (continued)

throughout the 38-mile ride from St. Charles to Marthasville. This made for some pretty miserable conditions and the water puddles and mud slowed the cyclists considerably. On Tuesday, the cyclists rode 68 miles between Marthasville and Jefferson City and on day three, rode 51 miles between Jefferson City and Boonville. This consisted of three long days of pedaling on a flat trail prior to the steady climb out of the Missouri river bottom in the last two days. Back-to-back 36-mile rides between Boonville, Sedalia, and Clinton were very difficult, despite being the shortest routes of the trip. The long, gradual grades that allowed steam engines to climb with relative ease required bicyclists to work extremely hard. Gear was hauled from one campsite to the next in two Ryder trucks. Each day, when riders arrived at the destination, they would find their bags, which had been set out on the ground in long rows, and start setting up camp. These tent cities were usually located in city parks. A shower truck traveled from one camp site to the next, so hot showers were available each evening and morning. Breakfast and dinner were provided each day by the

ride organizers, but for lunch the riders would stop along the trail at little “mom and pop” operations, such as bars, grocery stores, and bike shops. These establishments were not always set up for preparing food. However, with 300 hungry bicyclists riding by with money to spend, the local businesses found a way to feed them. One place may be cooking hamburgers on a gas grill out on the porch and another may use a George Forman Grill sitting on the bar. You didn’t see any McDonald’s or Arby’s in these small Missouri towns. The cyclists are allowed to ride at their own pace and are encouraged to explore the small communities along the trail. Most riders were on the trail by 7:00 a.m. to beat the Missouri heat, which was not a major factor this year. Rest stops were located approximately every 10 miles providing sport drink powders, water, fruit, and rest rooms. The trail was “swept” each afternoon at 5:00 p.m. and any riders still on the trail were picked up and delivered to the camp site. The Katy Trail closely follows the Missouri River, so the scenery is truly great. The most awesome parts of the Trail are where the river flows on one side and

vertical cliffs tower high above you on the other. You can see such a portion of the trail from I-70 when you cross the Missouri River near Columbia. The Katy Trail runs along the east side of the river. For additional information on the Katy Trail Ride:

www.mostateparks.com/katytrail.htm

Submitted by Arlen Ricke, District Conservationist, Dighton Field Office and

Leah Ricke, Resource Conservationist, Dodge City AO



Pictured L to R: Lori Graff, Arlen and Leah Ricke pause for a moment before hitting the Katy Trail.

Weather Stations on Kansas Landscape

Three new additions have made their way to the Kansas landscape. This past June, weather stations were assembled near Phillipsburg, Centralia Lake, and Arkansas City (Abrams). NRCS personnel from the National Water and Climate Center, Portland, Oregon; NRCS

Salina State Office; and Kansas State University, Manhattan, installed the stations. The station at Phillipsburg became operational and was recording information on the climate in that area the same day! Hourly readings of temperature, wind speed/direction, relative humidity, solar radiation, barometric

pressure, and rainfall are recorded. Soil temperature, soil salinity, and soil moisture from sensors that were placed in the soil profile are also read. This information is relayed to the National Water and Climate Center. These weather station readings can be accessed at the



New weather station being assembled in Phillipsburg.

Weather Stations (continued)

following web site address:
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/>.
 Information collected at this site can be used for many purposes including monitoring the progress of droughts, rainfall total, prevailing wind directions, and evaporation rates. The information

collected can be applied to improving different farming practices including irrigation recommendation. These weather stations can help people better understand the climate and weather patterns in their respective areas.

Submitted by Jody Gienger,
 Student Trainee, Hays AO

Upper Wakarusa Getting Noticed



NRCS student trainee Latrisha Manning, Topeka is pictured along side a new interpretative map of the Upper Wakarusa Watershed.

A new interpretative map of the Upper Wakarusa Watershed is now located at the newly re-designed overlook at Clinton Lake. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reservoir is located just west of Lawrence and receives 800,000 visitors a year. Because the map is located next to the Lake, it was titled "Clinton Lake Watershed" to simplify the understanding of a watershed. The Upper Wakarusa drains parts of Douglas, Osage, Shawnee, and Wabaunsee counties.

Since the 1940's, the watershed has been the subject of numerous studies and land treatment programs. The desire to educate the public at a highly visible location, led the local Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) educational work group to develop the concept for the map. Dennis Brinkman, NRCS District Conservationist, Topeka and Kevin Dobbs, GIS Specialist, Kansas Biological Survey, Lawrence teamed up to complete the final product. In addition to this map, a traveling scale virtual

model of the Upper Wakarusa was also made. The model features contours of the watershed milled into a plastic base with the latest color photography printed on the surface. People can see the landscape; feel the hills and follow the streams. The concept of a watershed is much easier explained.

Submitted by Dennis Brinkman, District Conservationist, Topeka FO

Brown v. Board Historic Site

"Visitors will find the exhibits and programs we offer challenging and thought-provoking."

-Steve Adams, National Park Superintendent

Over 5,000 people were on hand for the 50th anniversary of the Grand Opening celebration at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Topeka Kansas. "We're excited that the school is now open to visitors," said the National Park

Superintendent Steve Adams. "Visitors will find the exhibits and programs we offer challenging and thought-provoking. No one can walk away from this experience without being moved by the compelling stories and images of the struggle for the desegregation of American society."

The Grand Opening coincided with the 50th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that led to school desegregation. Among the many highlights of the program were the keynote address of President George W. Bush and the

Brown v. Board (continued)

remarks of long-time civil rights leader Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. "The grand opening celebration was successful because so many people and organizations on the local, state and federal level put their heart and souls into the grand opening and commemoration. They truly deserve our heartfelt thanks for their efforts." Brown v. Board of Education National

National Historic Site is one of five national park sites in the Sunflower State. The park was created by an Act of Congress in October 1992 and was established in December 1993. The site, the former Monroe Elementary School is one of the four segregated elementary schools for African-American children in Topeka, is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

daily except for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.
Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO

What's Happening

September 10 - 19

Kansas State Fair
Hutchinson

October 11

Holiday – Columbus Day

November 11

Holiday – Veterans Day

November 21- 24

Kansas Association of
Conservation Districts
(KACD) Annual Convention
Wichita Airport Hilton

November 25

Holiday – Thanksgiving Day

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