

Kansas Highlights

August 2003

WETLAND GAME HELPS STUDENTS

A wetland game, resembling the old "hop-scotch" game of your childhood, is being used to educate grade school children about the importance of playa lake wetlands in Kansas. "No person sees the damage they do by converting a single wetland," says Tom Flowers, District

Conservationist. "Through the 'Wetland Game', the students can see the cumulative effect of wetland conversion." Students, acting as the Endangered Whooping Crane, are asked to migrate from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, pausing along the way at a chain of wetlands to rest and feed. A single wetland is converted to farmland, but the students see that little damage is done because they can simply jump over the converted wetland. A second wetland is converted to a shopping center. Again, little damage is done because they can jump over it. Then a drought occurs and two more wetlands dry up. Migration is no longer possible and students begin to see that the farmland and shopping center conversions really do matter even though the individual doing the conversion may see the importance.

The game is then converted from wetlands to a tropical rainforest where two acres of rainforest are being converted to agricultural use every second. No individual can see the effect of their conversion due to the vast size of the rainforest. Over 500 students played the "Wetland Game" this year. During the past seven years, it is estimated that over 3,000 students have played the game and came away with a greater appreciation of playa lake wetlands. *Submitted by Tom Flowers, District Conservationist, Meade*



Tom Flowers, District Conservationist educates children about the importance of playa lake wetlands.

SOLOMON VALLEY RC&D AUTHORIZED

"Just fabulous" was Don Heikes' response a day after receiving the word that the Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman had authorized Solomon Valley Resource Conservation and Development (SVRC&D) area. Heikes, Lenora, is president of SVRC&D Council. The SVRC&D area represents six counties: Norton, Phillips, Smith, Graham, Rooks, and Osborne. The SVRC&D area was formed in 2001.

RC&D areas are locally led by grassroots councils comprised of volunteers, civic leaders, and locally elected officials. RC&D projects implemented by the councils provide practical solutions for land and resource conservation, environmental enhancement, water management, and community development.

According to Heikes, after the SVRC&D area formed and the Council submitted its application to the Secretary of Agriculture, the Council assisted with projects such as Kansas Health Foundation Community Leadership Initiative 2, Grant Writing Workshops, and W.A.C.K.Y. Day. (W.A.C.K.Y. stands for Wildlife, Agriculture, and Conservation Knowledge for Youth.) All of these projects requested some type of assistance such as planning, organization, development, or financial, from the SVRC&D Council.

"It means a lot to have the Solomon Valley authorized," said Heikes. "It will mean better handling of the projects in our area because we will have a full-time coordinator to help the Council and that person will bring expertise on how to develop the projects to help the rural communities."

"We are pleased that Secretary Veneman authorized the Solomon Valley RC&D," said Harold L. Klaege, State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Salina. "We look forward to working with the Solomon Valley Council on the newly authorized RC&D in helping their rural communities to improve environmental, social, and economic conditions."

Kansas now has nine authorized RC&D areas and one RC&D area awaiting authorization by the Secretary of Agriculture. Seventy-four counties are served by RC&D councils. "It is the goal of the State Association of RC&D (SARC&D) Councils to have the state covered by RC&D areas by 2005," said Peggy Blackman, SARC&D president.

For more information about RC&Ds, visit with your local USDA Service Center NRCS or conservation district staff. Additional information on the RC&D program can be found at <http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs> and go to Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D).

RECYCLING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Since 1992, the Emporia-Lyon County Recycling Advisory Board and the Emporia City Commission have recognized individuals and businesses that are doing a good job of recycling. This year, the NRCS Emporia Area Office was recognized for their efforts in recycling paper, newspapers, cardboard boxes, phone books, and aluminum cans. The NRCS Emporia Area Office received the annual Community Area Recycling Excellence (C.A.R.E.) Award from the City of Emporia, Lyon County, and Chase County Recycling Advisory Board. Bill Gilliam, Assistant State Conservationist, and Janice Michaels, Office Automation Clerk, accepted the award on behalf of the office at an awards ceremony April 16, 2003. *Submitted by Barbara Jasper, Office Assistant, Emporia*



LITTLE BLUE RIVER PROJECT RECEIVES EARTH TEAM AWARDS

The Washington Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office and Washington County Conservation District have recently been recognized for their volunteer activities associated with the Little Blue River Project. The office work group received the Fiscal Year -2002 Outstanding Kansas Earth Team Volunteer Group Award and the FY-2002 Northern Plains Region Group Volunteer National Earth Team Award.

Last April, over 320 Earth Team volunteers participated in revegetating three miles of severely eroding streambanks along the Little Blue River in Washington County. The volunteers consisted of 220 Boy Scouts from 11 different troops, students from 3 area high school FFA chapters, and local landowners and operators. The volunteers planted over 20,000 bare-root trees and shrubs and 3,000 willow cuttings, and installed 400 tree shelters on 11 different sites before rain chased them out of the fields. Each site had one to two "leaders" that helped direct the plantings. The leaders consisted of volunteers from NRCS, Washington County Conservation District (CD), Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Westar Energy Green Team, Kansas Forest Service, and the State Conservation Commission (SCC). Tree planters pulled behind tractors were used on the level areas. The trees on the slopes and the willow cuttings were planted by hand. By May 3, 2002, all the sites were completed and 1,706 hours had been donated to the Earth Team with a total of 33,000 trees, shrubs, and willow stakes planted and 900 tree shelters installed. This project resulted in 44 acres of riparian forest buffers being established along the Little Blue River.



Earth Team volunteers planting trees along the Little Blue River.

The purpose of the project is to stabilize and heal the worst eroding stretches of the river. This multi-year project consists of 30 different project sites that will treat 8 miles of eroding streambanks along the Little Blue River. *Submitted by Dee Minge, District Conservationist, Washington*

LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION BICENTENNIAL IN KANSAS

From 2003 through 2006, our nation will observe the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition with commemorative events, festivals, and reenactments. An estimated 25 million travelers will drive, camp, bike, paddle, ride, and walk in the explorers' footsteps.



The Lewis and Clark Trail in Kansas follows 123 miles of the Missouri River abutting the northeast corner of the state between Kansas City and the Nebraska border. The trail contains approximately eight campsites used by the expedition from June 26-July 10, 1804, and on their return trip on September 10-14, 1806. The Glacial Hills RC&D Council has been involved with developing the Lewis and Clark Trail along the Missouri River.

Many "firsts" were experienced by expedition members in present-day Kansas:

- the first of many trails were blazed by American explorers through the state
- the first court martial in the Louisiana Purchase (John Collins, for "getting drunk on his post")
- the first encounter with Native American habitation (two former Kansas Indian villages)
- the first bison were sighted by expedition members
- the first Independence Day celebration in the West (near present-day Atchison)

While in Kansas, the explorers also wrote finding the abundance of game, fruit and berries; killing deer and elk; finding traces of an abandoned French fort; and a snake biting incident of expedition member Joseph Fields.

Kansas will receive national and international media coverage and host hundreds of thousands of visitors during the bicentennial years. The state has been designated a "Signature Event", one of the ten American communities selected by the National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. The Signature Event, "A Journey Fourth" will take place July 3-4, 2004, in the Missouri River communities of Atchison and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri. The Kansas City area activities will include a spectacular Fourth of July fireworks display over the Missouri River. For more information about the Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial, go to their website <http://www.lewisandclark200.org>
Submitted by Gary Satter, RC&D Coordinator, Valley Falls

WATER RALLY 2003

Last spring nearly 1,000 students and adult volunteers attended Wyandotte County's first annual Water Rally. It was organized to increase awareness and appreciation for water resources and the issues such as non-point source pollution that impact watersheds. Students, pre-K through 12, were led through a rotational schedule of hands-on water-related activities. These included: water quality monitoring, aquatic insect sampling, non-point source pollution, historic water use, water issue debates, water availability, and stream hydrology. Students were able to visit with environmental exhibitors such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, MAST ambulance, F.L. Schlagle Environmental Library, and the Wyandotte County Recycling Center. NRCS was on hand to demonstrate the Stream Trailer and Rainfall Simulator, as well as assist with the activities.
Submitted by Beth Held, District Manager, Kansas City



Students take part in water quality monitoring during Wyandotte County's first annual Water Rally.

HISTORIC YATES CENTER HOTEL RECEIVES NEW LIFE

The historic, 21-room Woodson Hotel in Yates Center has played host to many famous guests such as Buffalo Bill, and if it could talk, many interesting stories could be told. This hotel, constructed of native sandstone quarried north of Yates Center, cost a mere \$10,500 in 1887. Interested in seeing the hotel preserved, a group of local citizens formed a non-profit organization. This group enlisted the aid of See-Kan RC&D in 1998 after raising money through bake sales and dinners.

Work started on the hotel after receiving \$90,000 from the Heritage Trust Fund grant. Salvage of the exterior stone is being cleaned and reused after shoring up the floors. Phase I of the project is expected to be completed later this year. The total cost is estimated at \$161,700.

Although this See-Kan RC&D project has been slow at times, Yates Center citizens who have diligently worked for several years, can be proud of what is being accomplished. *Submitted by Mary Sue Carlson, Office Automation Clerk, See-Kan RC&D, Chanute*



The Woodson Hotel in Yates Center is being restored thanks in part to the See-Kan RC&D and local citizens.

A LOT OF WALNUTS

A 93 year-old man planting 93 acres of trees? Some might say that Doyle Derrick's vision for his Doniphan County land is "nuts" and it is...walnuts! "Trees are ideal, and Doniphan County has some of the best soil for growing them," says Derrick.

Derrick started by hand-planting a row of black walnuts along the top edge of a field bordering Wolf River in March. He purchased the bare-root seedlings from the Kansas Forest Service in a recent shipment of 19,000 trees. In addition to these trees, over a thousand locally-grown walnuts nurtured and transplanted by Derrick are part of his project to plant 93 acres of trees in 2003. Since the late 1970's, he has planted roughly 100,000 walnut trees.

Even at 93, Derrick is a forward-looking man. After all, he will need to live another 70 years before these trees are large enough to be harvested. But perhaps when you survive to the age of 93, you've learned to ignore criticism. Some folks thought I was crazy admits Derrick. "But then a lot of them are gone now," he says with a wry smile. Why is he planting thousands of trees? "I like walnuts and they make a good log."

John Meisenheimer, District Conservationist, and Paul Kleppe, Buffer Coordinator, helped design these riparian forest buffers as part of the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program and Kansas Water Quality Buffer Initiative Programs. Derrick hired high school students to help with the project and borrowed a small tree planter from the Kansas Forest Service. "Instead of Johnny Appleseed, we should all call him Doyle Walnutseed," says Bill Miller, Derrick's son-in-law. *Submitted by Donna Penny, District Manager, Troy*

CONSERVATION DISTRICT SPONSORS NON-POINT SOURCE EDUCATIONAL TOUR

The Rush County Conservation District sponsored a Non-Point Source Educational Tour last May. The purpose of the tour was to educate the district's conservation partners on the programs the Conservation district and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides the county. The tour consisted of sites that demonstrated the District's Buffer Program along with the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) and the Non-Point Source program. The tour also touched on a part of the Pheasants Forever program. Tour stops included waterways and windbreaks constructed through the CCRP Program, a CRP interseeding to maximize wildlife benefit, and livestock waste system relocations.

The tour finished with a short presentation summarizing the district's efforts to promote the variety of programs in Rush County and stressed the economic and environmental impact. It is through the efforts of all the conservation partners' organizations, businesses, and units of government, the conservation

District can maintain this strong diversified program. *Submitted by Stephanie Royer, District Manager - NPS Coordinator, Rush County Conservation District*

2003 ENVIROTHON

The 2003 National Envirothon was held at St. Mary's College in Maryland this past July. Representing Kansas was a five-member team from Wilson County. Although the team did not place, they learned lots and met many new friends. Good job!

UPCOMING CONSERVATION EVENTS

August 24 – 26 – The State Association of Kansas Resource Conservation and Development Councils 7th Annual Conference and Meeting, Garden City

September 5 – 14 – State Fair, Hutchinson

November 23 – 25 – Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) Convention, Wichita Airport Hilton

Kansas Highlights is issued three times a year. 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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