

## Kansas Highlights - April 2004

### **“MEETING THE CHALLENGE” MEETING**

Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees attended an All Employees Meeting, February 17 - 19, 2004 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Wichita. With a theme of “Meeting the Challenge,” the conference brought together employees to offer an opportunity to network, attend training and breakout sessions, and hear speakers to help both personally and professionally.

NRCS Associate Chief Tom Weber kicked off the meeting and reported on accomplishments and priorities of the agency. Dana York, NRCS, Director, Operations Management Oversight Division spoke on accountability systems. York explained this is a system of data collection tools, processes, and related applications that provides information in a timely manner to support the Agency's strategic and performance planning, budget formulation, and workforce planning.

Ron Culberson, speaker, entertained the group with the Fundamentals of Humor and how to add a “Bolt of *Lightening*” to life and work. Ron related fun and humor in everyday experiences to his audience.

On Wednesday, employees attended breakout sessions of their choice on a variety of topics. Personal health strategies, financial/estate planning, field office business tools, effective communications, ArcView update, time management, range management were just a few of the sessions offered.

An awards breakfast was held on Thursday. Jeff Hart, Natural Resource Specialist, Salina State Office led this entertaining session where some serious and not-so-serious awards were given. Harold L. Klaege, State Conservationist concluded the meeting by thanking NRCS'ers and reminding them that only they can make the change and use the tools presented at the conference to “Meet the Challenge.” *Photos from this meeting are on Page 6. Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO*

### **50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PL-566 CELEBRATION PLANNED IN KANSAS**

This year, 2004, marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Small Watershed Program. In commemoration, the State Association of Kansas Watersheds is planning a celebration in honor of this program. The event will be held on August 4, 2004, at Whitewater watershed, Site 14, near Newton, Kansas, in Harvey County. The Governor of Kansas has signed a proclamation recognizing the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on this date.

Kansas, a national watershed leader has built over 800 watershed dams with 100 remaining to be built. These dams were designed with a 50-year lifespan and continue to provide many benefits, such as reducing flooding or providing public water supplies and/or recreational opportunities and more. Some dams are beginning to reach their lifespan; however, with some modifications the lifetime of these dams can be extended.

Check the SAKW Web site <http://www.sakw.org/index.asp?DocumentID=560> for the latest details about the celebration. *Submitted by Mary Shaffer, Public Affairs Specialist, Salina SO*

## WATER-WISE GUYS

Due to Fall River and West Creek being designated as high priority Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) watersheds for fecal coliform bacteria and dissolved oxygen, respectively, Jeff Davidson, Greenwood County Extension Agent, and Doug Spencer, NRCS District Conservationist, Eureka FO have started a WATER-WISE column in the *Madison News* and *Eureka Herald* newspapers. They are known as the "Water-wise guys" and the column is meant to provide information about Best Management Practices (BMP) that can be performed to protect water quality in Greenwood County. The column will be featured weekly for local residents to help inform them of how valuable and precious clean water is for each individual whether they live in town or in the country. It is also being used as a way to inform people about the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) project currently being developed in the Fall River drainage. It's a great opportunity to inform residents about ways to protect our natural resources. Below is a reprint of one of the articles:

### WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT WATER QUALITY?

City and state agencies have done an excellent job of providing safe drinking water. They have developed a number of treatment and monitoring systems to guarantee the safety of your drinking water supply. But these systems aren't free. Since 1988, Kansas cities have spent about \$550 million on water pollution control systems. When you help reduce water pollution, you're helping direct our tax dollars toward projects (like schools, parks and community projects) rather than allocating it to water treatment. Although most people don't drink the water directly from Kansas lakes and streams, you might swim in the water or eat the fish you catch from it. And, even if you don't personally swim or fish in Kansas surface waters, your neighbors might or, in a few years, your children or grandchildren might.

It's our responsibility to do our part now to keep Kansas waters clean. By making minor changes in how you do things, you can greatly help keep Kansas waters clean. What YOU do makes a difference. Whether you own a farm or ranch, city lot, or just live in an apartment, the little details of your everyday actions can make a difference. Simple actions, such as properly disposing of car oil or animal wastes, can be helpful to Kansas waters, especially when repeated by homeowners all over the county and state. We hope you'll read this column each week as we bring you timely "best management practices" for making the waters of Greenwood County the best in Kansas. Water quality is important—to our pocketbook, and to our quality of life.

### EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

On April 6, 2004, Darla Juhl, newly selected RC&D Coordinator for the Solomon Valley RC&D, Stockton and Jan Klaus, Office Assistant, Hays Area Office, attended the first annual Fort Hays State University (FHSU) Campus-Community Service Fair in Hays, Kansas. The fair was sponsored by the American Democracy Project, FHSU's Political Science Honorary Society, and the FHSU Service-Learning Committee. The fair presented the opportunity for local and area agencies to meet with students and faculty looking for greater community involvement. A total of 37 agencies participated in the event.

Darla and Jan visited with over 35 students promoting the NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program. In addition NRCS has now been added to the FHSU Community Agency Database as a means to connect students with a particular volunteer project or service whenever the need arises. The fair also provided the opportunity to seek out potential RC&D projects. For more information on this annual event, contact Jan Klaus or Darla Juhl. *Article submitted by Jan Klaus, Hays AO*



Darla Juhl, Solomon Valley RC&D Coordinator visits with a student at FHSU's Campus-Community Service Fair about the Earth Team Volunteer Program.

## EARTH TEAM RECOGNITION

The following Earth Team Awards were selected and forwarded on for regional competition. The Individual Earth Team Award winner is **Norma Savely** from Wilson County. Norma has assisted the field office with general receptionist duties while the district manager was out and has even kept the office open when the office staff was gone. She has assisted in the educational program in the county and has been the main contributor in getting meeting preparation done, organizing tours, and assisting at these events. With Norma as a volunteer, the entire office staff has more time to get conservation on the minds and hearts of the people of Wilson County. This in turn means more conservation on the land!

The Earth Team Group Volunteer Award winner is the **Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE)** in Manhattan. For the last four years, KACEE has participated in the national "Water Festival" event. Locally, they have sponsored the Topeka Water Festival. Nearly 1,000 teachers and children have participated in the event. To put a show like this together, 45 different groups and organizations cooperated with the KACEE. This group has held training sessions for other communities to get a water festival started in their communities.

The NRCS Employee Earth Team Award winner is **Loretta Cecil**, Office Automation Assistant, Dodge City Area Office. Loretta has turned the Earth Team Volunteer Program around in Area 2. Loretta was still a new employee when she was asked to take the Area Volunteer Coordinator position and really knew little about the program. However, she has promoted the use of volunteers, and Area 2 has moved from 1,222 hours and 88 percent of offices using volunteers in 2001 to 6,667 hours and 100 percent in 2003. Loretta has visited offices and calls frequently to encourage the use volunteers. Her dedication to the volunteer program has moved her area from last in the state to second.

The Kansas Earth Team Traveling Award winner is **Area 2** for their exceptional use of volunteers.  
*Submitted by Lonnie Miller, Earth Team Coordinator, Olathe FO*

## RECYCLING

Edwards County Conservation District has been doing their part in the recycling effort. The district was awarded a grant from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Bureau of Waste Management for \$38,000. They purchased a ¾ ton truck and a recycling trailer in 2002.

In 2003, the district took over the daily operations of the center and purchased a building to store recyclables. The recycling center has increased their recycled material weight from 2 tons a month to 10. Currently, the district has a volunteer family who manages the project. The family consists of two teenage children who work an unbelievable amount of time. Because of their efforts, the center has been transformed from an eyesore, to a place of great pride. Citizens, who previously didn't recycle, have now started visiting the center.

Since more and more people in the Lewis, Belpre, and Offerle communities are using the recycling center trailer, the district has made carts available. These carts are emptied weekly, allowing people to recycle every day.

The Edwards County Recycling Center accepts plastic, glass, and cardboard. In addition, the center and the Central Prairie RC&D have begun accepting old bicycles. After bikes are collected, they are sent to the Ellsworth Correctional Facility. Here, the bicycles are reconditioned. Non-profit organizations can request and distribute the bicycles, free-of-charge to needy children. The district is extremely proud of the difference it is making in this small community. *Submitted by Stacy Neilson, District Manager, Kinsley FO*

## CRP MANAGEMENT FOCUS OF PARTNERSHIP EFFORT

Personnel from the USDA Service Center in Lincoln County, the Post Rock Ringnecks Chapter of Pheasants Forever, and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) are working together this spring to enhance the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for pheasants and other wildlife. Their goal is to take advantage of new opportunities in the 2002 Farm Bill that offers landowners the option to receive cost-share funds for voluntarily performing CRP enhancements. Cost share is now available

from USDA on eligible CRP lands to inter-seed forbs and legumes, conduct prescribed burns, and remove woody vegetation. The focus of this collaborative effort is to improve brood-rearing habitat for pheasants by interseeding legumes into standing cover or immediately following a prescribed burn. What really made this effort possible is the cost-share now available from USDA. Last year, KDWP and Pheasants Forever teamed up to hire contractors to enhance CRP in western Kansas but those funds were limited and the full cost of the enhancement work was paid by KDWP. Now with the available cost-share from USDA, this year's efforts can treat more acres for less cost per acre with the same funding levels.

Finding and taking advantage of these opportunities is the key to realizing wildlife benefits from provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill. Wildlife organizations such as Pheasants Forever worked hard to ensure wildlife habitat considerations remain co-equal with water quality and soil erosion benefits provided by CRP and are now playing an important role in seeing those benefits become a reality. The Post Rock Ringnecks Chapter will be performing CRP enhancements for any interested landowner and will then receive USDA cost-share payments to help reimburse the chapter for the cost of the work completed. Service Center personnel in Lincoln have been instrumental in making this effort work, taking the extra time to complete the inevitable paperwork associated with contract revisions, cost-list development, and payment applications. Hopefully this pilot effort can be used as a model for other counties in the future to create a truly win-win situation for landowners and wildlife. *Article submitted by Matt Smith, KDWP Biologist, Hays AO*

## 2004 MID AMERICA FARM SHOW

About 350 exhibits representing nearly 300 U.S. companies were found at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual Mid America Farm Expo. The event was held March 23 – 25, 2004, in Salina. NRCS and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) hosted a booth this year. A new exhibit pertaining to the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) was developed to showcase the ring-necked pheasant, greater/lesser prairie chicken, and the bobwhite quail. A big thank you to Pam Hays, Ellsworth County Buffer Coordinator, Ellsworth; Robert Schiffner, NRCS Resource Conservationist, Hays; Andy Phelps, NRCS District Conservationist, Russell; Ron Klein, NRCS District Conservationist, Lyons; Rod Egbarts, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Salina SO; Matt Smith, KDWP Biologist, Hays; and Aaron Deters, KDWP Bio-tech, Wilson who worked the booth this year. *Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO*



This WHIP exhibit is now available for loan through the State Office Public Affairs.

## THE FOLK LORE OF CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PLANTS

"The historical use of native plants has become of interest to many Tribal people and the general public," said Patrick Broyles, Soil Conservationist at the NRCS Manhattan, Kansas Plant Materials Center (PMC). The presentation "Ethnobotany of Culturally Significant Plants" was developed by Broyles as a general educational tool to satisfy this interest. Ethnobotany equates to folk lore for the not-so-technical person. During his over two years of working at the PMC, Broyles has given numerous talks about plants. Sixty-five plants are included in the presentation. Each slide includes a plant photo, common and scientific names along with plant facts and medicinal, cultural, and food information. From his accumulation of talks on plants, Broyles developed a presentation individuals can view and download in the PDF format, or they can assemble their unique PowerPoint presentation by selecting the slides they want to use and give credit to the USDA NRCS Manhattan PMC. The files are available at the following web site: <http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/kspmcc>, and then clicking on "The Ethnobotany of Culturally Significant Plants."



The slides are not to be cited as reference material or as an in-depth explanation of individual plant characteristics and uses. If you are interested in knowing greater details about certain plants, just access the corresponding Plant Guide or Fact Sheet on the Plants Database web site: <http://plants.usda.gov/> or the address listed next to the PowerPoint slide. For more information contact Broyles, at 785-345-9436.  
*Submitted by Richard Wynia, PMC Manager, Manhattan, Kansas*

## SOIL QUALITY PRESENTATION

A soil quality presentation was given to Future Farmers of America (FFA) students at the Wellington High School by Matt Markley, District Conservationist, Wellington. Eighteen students from diverse backgrounds – farm and non-farm - with interests in agriculture or horticulture enjoyed Matt's 50-minute presentation on soil quality and a general soils overview. No-till was also discussed as a rapidly expanding local farming method.

Although technology has advanced the art and science of giving presentations with PowerPoint, nothing can beat a basic hands-on demonstration. The biggest item of interest was how the soil profiles were extracted from the ground by the soil probe truck and then preserved in the wooden display trays.

The school's Ag Department has a greenhouse on the school grounds where they care for hundreds of horticultural plants. These plants are sold in April to augment their program. This department will be expanded next year when the staff and students move into a brand new \$17 million High School building. A large part of that is a 10,000 sq. ft. building devoted just to Ag and FFA. Also included is a state-of-the-art greenhouse. Agriculture definitely has a bright future in Sumner County as represented in these young adults, their instructors, and a supportive School Board. *Submitted by Matt Markley, District Conservationist, Wellington FO*



Matt Markley, District Conservationist, Wellington shows the FFA class a soil profile.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 25 – May 2** – National Stewardship Week

**May** – American Wetlands Month

**May 18** - Progressive Farmer's Farm Safety Day –  
*For more information, contact Jane Zook, Coordinator, Larned FO*

**June 11** – Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), Kansas Council of Chapters Annual Meeting – Manhattan PMC  
*For more information contact Steve Brillhart, Hutchinson AO*

**July 24 – 28** – SWCS, National Meeting – St. Paul, Minnesota

**August 4** – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of PL-566 Celebration – Newton

## NRCS Retirees We Want You!!

The new NRCS Volunteer Coordinator for the State Office, Carman Guries is hoping that retired NRCS employees will consider volunteering their time and talents. With their knowledge and vast experience in NRCS, they are a valuable asset NRCS needs in helping us accomplish our conservation mission. If you are interested in volunteering, please call Carman at 785-823-4538 or email at [carman.guries@ks.usda.gov](mailto:carman.guries@ks.usda.gov)

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](mailto:sheila_forrester@ks.nrcs.usda.gov).

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