

Kansas Highlights

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Kansas Hosts Asian Pacific Islander Organization

Over 100 people across the nation gathered August 8–12, 2005 in Wichita, Kansas, to attend the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) 7th Annual Training Conference. The theme for the conference was “Cultural Diversity in Conservation.”

Pooh Vongkhamdy, APIO President, kicked off the conference with his welcome. Harold L. Klaege, Kansas NRCS State Conservationist, and Sarah Braasch, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief, also gave welcoming remarks.

Guest speaker at Tuesday's luncheon was Mark Rey, Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, USDA. Several recognitions were made including: APIO Awards, Lifetime Membership Recognition, and APIO Scholarship recipients.

APIO was honored to have NRCS Chief Bruce Knight as a featured speaker on Wednesday morning.

Kansas NRCS was well represented at the conference. Several employees made presentations. Assistant

State Conservationist for Technical Resources, Jeff Hart, and State Resource Conservationist, James Krueger, presented the National Conservation Planning Database and eGov Applications. Travis Rome, Cartographer, and Chad Volkman, Cartographer, presented on “Global Position System and Geographic Information System” Technology in NRCS Field Office Operations.” Jane Medina, Human Resources Manager, and Debbie Kaiden, Human Resources Specialist, presented sessions on “Preparing for the Job Interview and the Application Process.”

The conference included breakout sessions that ranged in topics from RUSLE2, Economics of Conservation, Grazing Land Management, Unconscious Discrimination, New Technologies in NRCS Engineering, Water Conservation - Quantity and Quality, and Career Enhancement.

The State Conservationist's Mentoring Session provided folks an opportunity to ask career-related questions to Kansas State Conservationist, Harold Klaege; Minnesota State

Conservationist, Bill Hunt; North Dakota State Conservationist, Serapio “J.R.” Flores; and New Mexico State Conservationist, Rosendo Trevino III.

A highlight of the conference was a conservation farm tour on Thursday. Approximately 75 people traveled in air-conditioned busses and made several stops on the Cheney Lake Watershed. This private, non-profit organization is based upon a unique urban/rural partnership. Farmers, ranchers, and other rural residents of this 633,449-acre watershed are working with the City of Wichita, the largest city in Kansas, to protect a primary drinking water source for more than 300,000 people. Stops were made at the following farms: James Schlickau, Tom Doan, Ron Jacques, and Jacob Beachy.

The 8th Annual APIO Training Conference will be held as a joint conference with the American Indian Alaska Native Employee Association for NRCS Aug. 28 - Sept. 1, 2006, in Alaska.

Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO

APIO Conference (continued)



Earth Team Volunteers Earn Award for Recycling

The Edwards County Conservation District (ECCD) has been notified that it is to receive a Pollution Prevention Award. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment presents Pollution Prevention Awards annually to those individuals, communities or community groups, businesses, and industries that have made a significant impact in protecting our environment by preventing pollution. This annual award program recognizes excellence for efforts in working toward a cleaner environment.

This year the Award for Recycling went to the ECCD. They have worked very hard to increase the amount of recycling done in the county.

After making several improvements in their facility, ECCD has increased recycling from 7 tons a month to almost 43 tons. The center is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Edwards County Earth Team volunteers, Richard and Stacy Neilson, handle the day-to-day operations of the center for the ECCD. The Neilson family has contributed over 2,025 volunteer hours to the recycling center. Their children, Brent and Megan Neilson, also work for the center. In addition to the Neilson family, the center also allows juvenile offenders to work and complete their community service time.

Stacy Neilson is the District Manager at the Kinsley NRCS Field Office in Edwards County. She has written and received \$57,200 in grants for the ECCD to use at the center. Those funds were used to purchase a ¾-ton truck, recycling trailer, forklift, recycling drop-off windows, and some of the funds were used to purchase the building.

The ECCD's hard work has made a positive change in Edwards County. Environmental awareness and community pride is being demonstrated throughout the county.

Submitted by Stacy Neilson, District Manager, Kinsley FO

New Use for Stream Trailer

Thanks to Herschel George, K-State Research Extension Specialist for the Marais des Cygnes Basin, the use of the stream trailer has been revived in Miami County. Herschel saw the trailer as an excellent way to teach students and landowners how a little proper planning can protect our streams. He uses a child's farm set, fabric, and bottle lids to build his "farm" along a stream. He fenced areas close to the barn, an area

with feed rings and an open pasture. He gave his audience the opportunity to discuss where and how they feed their cattle. Those who answered "at the barn" were reminded they would need to keep their lot clean by scraping and using a spreader to haul the accumulated waste. Likewise, even if bale rings are used farther away from the stream, highly concentrated waste areas could develop.

Herschel then suggested a better alternative would be to feed the cattle on the open range - unrolling only what was needed for the day and feeding at a different site each day. This distributes livestock waste across the area and can actually benefit the pastures. The display included a fenced pond with a freeze-proof tank installed. Herschel explained that providing alternative water will keep them out of the stream 80 percent of the time, according to college research.

Stream Trailer (continued)



Herschel George, K-State Research Extension Specialist, demonstrates the stream trailer in Miami County.

A good grass filter strip along the stream will filter runoff before it reaches the stream.

The stream trailer was used at the E.A.R.T.H. (Earth Awareness Researchers For Tomorrows Habitat) workshop for 6th grade students in Miami County last spring and at the Miami County Fair. Linda Prothe, Miami County Conservation District Manager, helped at the trailer and reported she was amazed how the "farm" attracted both old and young alike. It gave her an excellent opportunity to tell Miami County landowners about programs available to help landowners install

practices to protect our natural resources. Some of the children brought their parents to the display and told them they had seen the display at the spring workshop. They were proud to tell their parents what they had learned earlier in the year, proving the lasting benefits of the display.

Linda encourages those districts that have access to a stream trailer to consider dusting it off and trying this successful attraction at their local events.

*Submitted by Linda Prothe,
District Manager, Paola FO*



Doug Haller, BASF Vegetation Management Specialist, discusses chemical control options for Salt Cedar at the NCPWMA field day on June 8.

Salt Cedar, Canada Thistle Featured at Weed Management Field Day

Farmers and ranchers took home much information about Salt Cedar and Canada Thistle management at the North Central Prairie Weed Management Area's (NCPWMA) Salt Cedar and Canada Thistle field day, held June 8 at the Webster Wildlife Area near Stockton. Twenty-five participants were on hand for the event, which was co-sponsored by the Solomon Valley Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc.

Michael Zajic, Webster Wildlife Area Public Lands Manager, led the tour and talked about weed management issues faced at Webster Reservoir. Other presenters included Russell McKinney, Kansas State Plant Health Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Doug Haller, Vegetation Management Specialist for BASF -- the chemical company. McKinney discussed biological control of weeds and talked about the Salt Cedar Leaf Beetle, which is being used to combat Salt

Cedar. He also recommended thoroughly assessing sites before deciding on a weed management option. "It may take five to ten years for a biological control agent to reduce the economic impact of a target plant," McKinney says. "Depending on the weed, you may not want to wait that long, so you could use an integrated weed management approach with biological control as one of the tools. Assess each site, looking at current impacts, then choose your tools to

Field Day (continued)

best manage that site.” Haller addressed various chemical control options and demonstrated some of BASF’s weed control products, including a new product targeted specifically at Salt Cedar. “Salt Cedar is a tree that is basically sucking the Midwest dry,” Haller says. “It is a very inefficient plant that uses up to 250 gallons of water per day per tree. The more this species spreads across the Midwest, the more water we lose.” Marlene Peters, NCPWMA chairperson and RC&D council member, says she is

excited about the possibilities of future field days and would like to see more landowners get involved with the NCPWMA.

“This is just the beginning of some very unique team work, and we welcome landowners, operators, and anyone wanting to help in weed management education,” Peters says. “Our first field day was real eye opening on Salt Cedar and how much water it robs.”

The NCPWMA was formed in October 2004 under the

direction of the Solomon Valley RC&D and covers Graham, Jewell, Norton, Osborne, Phillips, Rooks, and Smith counties in northwest and north central Kansas. Membership is not limited and is open to landowners, operators, utility representatives, and wildlife and parks staff and anyone with an interest in weed management.

Submitted by Lisa Solomon, Program Assistant, Solomon Valley RC&D, Stockton

Meade County Birds: Wild Turkey

Wild turkeys are a wildlife success story in Kansas. Once hunted to the point where none remained in the state, they are now found throughout the state, thanks to a successful re-introduction effort. The wild turkey is a common resident of riparian areas in Meade County and is often seen in the Meade City Park. The flock which frequents the city park often visits bird feeders in the back yards of homes nearby.

Wild turkeys may be seen along any riparian area in the county, and flocks as large as 57 birds have been seen during mid-winter. In the spring, flocks are smaller with a few toms displaying to small groups of hens.

Turkey nests have been found, all in native grass, throughout

the month of May in several locations in the county, and recently hatched young birds seen as late as August.

When tom turkeys are displaying and guarding a flock of hens, they can become quite aggressive. They are known to attack people who wander too close to their girls, attacking them with large feet and flailing wings.

Turkeys are a beneficial bird, eating a diet of mostly insects in the summer. They can cause a lot of damage to hay stacks in the winter months when their diet changes over to grain. Large hay bales can be shredded by a flock of hungry turkeys making the feed difficult to distribute to cattle.

The turkey was once a

candidate to become the national symbol. Favored by Benjamin Franklin, the turkey is a beautiful and colorful bird. As we all know, the Bald Eagle won out in the end.

Come to Meade County and see if you can find the bird that almost made it as a symbol on our American currency and next time someone calls you a “turkey” tell them thanks for the compliment.

Submitted by Tom Flowers, District Conservationist, Meade FO



Linking Girls to the Land



Campers listen as Bob Tricks, NRCS soil scientist, talks about soil composition at the Linking Girls to the Land day camp in Hays.



A speckled kingsnake, handled by Lorrie Beck of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, gets up close and personal with campers at the Linking Girls to the Land Day Camp in Stockton.

Lessons on trees, turtles, and tornadoes were just a few of the activities held at the first ever Linking Girls to the Land in Northwest Kansas day camps. The camps were held at four sites during the first two weeks in June and drew nearly 140 participants.

The Solomon Valley, Smoky Hills, and Western Prairie RC&D areas teamed up with the Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council in Hays, Kansas, to put on the event. Linking Girls to the Land is an interagency partnership between the Girl Scouts of the USA's Elliott Wildlife Values Project and federal natural resource conservation agencies, initiatives, and partner organizations. The program encourages partnerships among the agencies in order to provide more conservation and outdoor programs to Girl Scout members across the country. Linking Girls to the Land provides environmental education programs, outdoor recreation skills, volunteer service, and career awareness.

The camps were offered to girls in first through third grades at sites in Oberlin, Hays, St. Francis, and Stockton. Participants rotated through a series of workshops that featured a 30-minute lesson on topics such as weather, trees, animals, soils, and history of the land.

Presenters and agencies included Jim Strine, Kansas Forest Service; Bob Tricks, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Cindy Fay, Priscilla Parnham, and Jennifer Ritterling, National Weather Service; Lorrie Beck, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Phyllis Howard, Reggie Murray, and Sherda Williams, Nicodemus National Historic Site. Staff members from the Kansas Natural Resource Foundation, K-State Research and Extension, Northwest Kansas Conservation and Environmental Alliance, and Sternberg Museum were also on hand to provide activities for the campers.

Monica Legleiter, Communications Director for Girl Scouts of

Sunflower Council called the camps "amazing."

"From the support of the local, state, and federal agencies involved in planning implementation of the workshops, to the smiles on girls' faces, the camps were absolutely amazing," Legleiter says.

Plans are underway for a second installment of Linking Girls camps to be held next spring. The spring camps will be for girls in grades 6 through 12 and focus on agricultural and environmental careers and entrepreneurship.

Submitted by Lisa Solomon, Program Assistant, Solomon Valley RC&D, Stockton

From the Human Resources Corner....

Questions about how to record time entries into WebTCAS can be some of the most complex you'll ever ask. Talk to someone in Human Resources, and they'll refuse to have a "theoretical" discussion. They'll want all sorts of details about why, how, who, where, and sometimes when the time was worked before giving an answer--and then they'll reserve the right to change their answer if any of your information changes!!

In March, compensatory time for travel (CTT) came into being--retroactive to January. In July, the General Manual (GM) changed when NRCS updated its policy on hours of duty. Kansas policy followed in August, and it has been revised since then! What you knew to be fact last year may not be fact this year. I strongly recommend you read GM 360, Part 427 on hours of duty. Some of it clarifies terminology that has been contradictory, some of it is the same stuff you've known ever since you started working for NRCS, and some of it is a significant change from "the way things always have been."

So to make your life easier, a chart has been developed to help you figure out how time worked outside the basic 40 hours each week should be reported. It is posted on the Kansas NRCS web-page, in the Kansas NRCS Employee section, under Human Resources Management, entitled "Tour of Duty." Take a look at it the next time you don't know how to record the time you have worked into WebTCAS.

The chart has two major sections: a very brief definition of some of the more confusing terms, along with the regulatory reference where you can find the complete definition if necessary; and a table that lists most of the reasons employees work outside their regular tour of duty and what type of "time" should be recorded into WebTCAS. The table works as a decision matrix. Start with Column A on the left and decide if the statement in each box is true for the incident you're concerned about. "IF" A (non-exempt) "AND" B (the next statement) "AND" C/D (the next statements) "THEN" E report the time as what is listed.

Don't like the answer? Use the regulatory citation that's listed in the last column, F, and look it up for yourself. Asking a friend how they correctly reported their time when they were in a similar situation last June may not get you an answer that is correct today. Look it up on the chart, and if you're confused (and confusion is easy) talk with your supervisor and timekeeper.

Submitted by Jane Medina, Human Resources Manager, Salina SO

What's Happening

October 10

HOLIDAY – Columbus Day

October 12 – 13

Congressional Jerry Moran
Tour
SW Kansas

November 11

HOLIDAY – Veteran's Day

November 20 - 22

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

November 24

HOLIDAY – Thanksgiving
Day