



Kansas Highlights

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Kansas Congressman Moran Studies

Conservation Efforts

Congressman Jerry Moran toured Barton, Stafford, Reno, Pratt, and Barber counties on Thursday and Friday, October 21 and 22, for his conservation tour in the state. Moran was joined on the tour of southcentral Kansas by Congressman Frank Lucas, Oklahoma who serves as Chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research. Tour stops included:

- Barton County: Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area; Stafford County Quivira National Wildlife Refuge;
- Reno County: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Cheney Lake Watershed; Marion and Alice Krehbiel's farm;
- Pratt County: Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks; NRCS and Pratt County Conservation District; Mark, Gwendolyn, and Jeremy Betzen's farm; Berry and Carla Bortz farm; and Bruce Davidson farm;
- Barber County: Ted Alexander Ranch.

Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO



Congressman Jerry Moran (left) with Marion Krehbiel.



Lyle Frees (right) explains about the Cheney Lake initiative.



Congressmen Frank Lucas, OK (left) and Jerry Moran, KS.



Moran and Lucas listen to questions during the five-county conservation tour.



Earth Team volunteer compiles data from the T-Bar Ranch.

Earth Team Volunteers Inventory Ranch

The T-Bar Ranch, owned by James Henderson in Wallace County, was recently inventoried by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Earth Team volunteers for alternative land use. Several years ago, NRCS and other organizations were given a tour of the ranch by the owner in hopes for information on prairie chicken habitat and trophy mule deer along with co-habitation with the cattle

operation. In July and August 2004, NRCS and Earth Team volunteers from K-State, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inventoried the 16,000 plus acre ranch to compile data for these possible venues. A total of nine volunteers donated approximately 250 hours of time to assist with the inventory. Having several hundred sites to inventory,

the Earth Team volunteers were vital in completing this monumental task. Roger Tacha, NRCS Resource Conservationist, Colby organized the inventory. For more information on the NRCS Earth Team in Kansas, contact Lonnie Miller, NRCS, Olathe, Kansas, at 913-764-1931 or any area coordinator.

Submitted by Jan Klaus,
Office Assistant, Hays AO

South Hutch NRCS Hosts Conservation Tour



Congressmen Lucas, Moran, and Harold L. Klaege, NRCS State Conservationist, attend the conservation tour of the Cheney Lake Watershed.

The South Hutchinson Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office, Reno County Conservation District, and Cheney Lake Watershed staffs hosted a portion of the conservation tour in southcentral Kansas attended by Congressmen Jerry Moran and Frank Lucas. The purpose of the tour was to show how conservation funding is helping the nation. A highlight of the tour was the Cheney Lake Watershed Project. Cheney Lake is nationally recognized for its leadership in developing a strong urban—rural partnership with the city of Wichita in the interest of protecting surface water quality in the watershed that feeds the lake.

Cheney Lake provides 60 to 70 percent of the drinking water for the city. The water began to exhibit taste and odor problems in the early 1990s. In response to these issues, the Cheney Lake Watershed Project was formed. The project is managed by a Citizen's Management Committee (CMC) comprised of seven farmers and ranchers who make their living in the watershed. The CMC has been working with federal, state and local partners since the beginning of the project to assist the efforts to improve water quality in the watershed. In addition to federal and state cost share, the city of Wichita also gives funding to watershed landowners who

implement Best Management Practices on the land. Lyle Frees, NRCS Water Quality Specialist, Salina SO, explained to the tour group that USDA is currently involved in a five-year study to see what works, what doesn't, and what new conservation programs should be implemented. Cheney Lake Watershed is one of the 20 selected watersheds across the nation to participate in this Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) assessment process. The CMC will look closely at the outcomes of this study to help them understand the function of the watershed. They want to help their neighbors find creative, cost-effective ways to protect water quality and

Moran and Lucas will be taking some of the information presented on the tour to the (Farm Bill) planning table.

maintain sustainable farms. Moran indicated that he and Lucas will begin working on the Farm Bill next year and would be taking some of the information they learned on the conservation tour to the planning table. Moran

indicated they did not know how the current economy would affect the 2007 program. He is worried that we may have seen the peak in terms of conservation funding, but he thinks conservation will continue to be a higher and higher priority as we

work to conserve land for future generations.

Submitted by Robert Wimer,
District Conservationist,
South Hutchinson FO

Morton County Volunteer...An Inspiration to All

The Morton County Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service (FS) wanted to develop a data source for air quality in the county and needed sites to place two air quality monitoring machines. One was placed on FS land in the southern part of the county, and Helen Ester Johns volunteered to have the other placed near her home in the northern part of the county. Helen also volunteered to collect the samples. Every six days, Helen carefully removes a filter from the machine, places it in an envelope, and mails it to a lab. She then places a new filter on the machine and prepares it to collect a new sample. She ensures the machine is functioning and calls to

schedule repairs if there are any problems. Helen has faithfully collected samples for a little over seven years. The soils of Morton County are all highly erodible and there was no data to show how vegetative cover affected the air quality. Collecting air quality samples over the years establishes a base and will allow an analysis of how changing soil cover affects the air quality. Eighty-three year old Helen Ester Johns is an inspiration to the citizens of Morton County and a great example of what Earth Team is all about!

Submitted by Tim Watson,
District Conservationist,
Elkhart FO



Helen Ester Johns is pictured next to an air quality monitoring machine placed near her home.

2004 Volunteer Awards



The 2004 Kansas NRCS Earth Team awards were recently announced. The winners included the following:

Area 1: Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council as the 2004 Kansas Earth Team RC&D/Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Award recipient for their effort in the wide range of recruiting of Earth Team volunteers

Area 2: Ms. Lori Hood, Liberal as the 2004 Kansas Individual Earth Team Volunteer Award recipient for her office assistance to the Coronado Crossing RC&D

Ashland NRCS Field Office as the 2004 Kansas Earth Team NRCS/National Association of Conservation Districts Award recipient

Area 3: Kids Ag Day Committee as the 2004 Kansas Group Earth Team

Volunteer Award recipient for their work in the Great Bend Field Office

State Office: Ms. Susan Picking, Salina, as the 2004 Kansas NRCS Employee Earth Team Volunteer Award recipient for her work in preparing an invitation for the first Earth Team volunteer luncheon at the state office

Congratulations to all the winners!

Donation Benefits Triple E Program

The Geary County Conservation District received a \$500 check for an environmental grant funded by the Wal-Mart Foundation. Tanya Erichsen, Water Quality/Buffer Coordinator, with the assistance of Linda Stewart, District Manager, wrote a grant to help fund the Triple E (Environmental Education Enrichment) Program, a week-long educational event held each year at the Sportsman's Acres and Milford Lake for

Geary County fifth graders. The students tour the Milford Fish Hatchery at Milford Nature Center and move on to Sportsman's Acres for water quality demonstrations of the *Enviroscape*, groundwater flow model, and the streamflow trailer. The money will be used for supplies for the trailer and food for 35 to 50 teachers and volunteers. It also will be used to fund signs for

landowners in Geary County who have participated in the Kansas Water Quality Buffer Initiative by planting buffer grass strips on cropland along Geary County streams and creeks. Buffers or filter strips can help protect water quality by slowing water down as it runs off cropland, allowing the grass to trap and filter sediment and pollutants.

Submitted by Evelyn Conrad, District Conservationist, Junction City FO

NRCS Donates Used Computers to School

Last spring, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) donated 15 old computers to Unified School District 226 in Meade. This donation meant for the first time ever, every student in their computer

class could be on a machine at the same time. It also meant twice the material was covered than in previous years. According to Rob Lauppe, Information Technology Specialist, Meade High School, the hard drives on each computer were

"rebuilt" and "gone through." The total cost was around \$80 and was a huge savings to the school district.

Submitted by Tom Flowers, District Conservationist, Meade FO



Students from Meade High School benefit from the computers donated by NRCS.

From the Human Resources (HR) corner... Applying for a Job

Applying for another job can be an uncomfortable process, particularly if you haven't for a decade or so. There are a number of things you can do to increase your own comfort level—most of which require you being partially prepared before the vacancy announcement is ever issued—the rest of which requires you to act before the day the vacancy announcement closes. The easiest thing to do is have your support documents ready to go.

NRCS requires (General Manual 360 Part 408.50) certain items be included in an employee's application package. Each item required for a specific position is listed on the vacancy announcement. Different positions have different requirements. Be sure to comply with the requirements of the position for which you are applying. Failure to include all of the information required will result in your application being removed from consideration.

Individuals responding to a merit promotion announcement can expect to be asked to provide a variety of documents as well as detailed personal information. If you anticipate applying for a promotion within the next 12

months, find the following documents and be prepared to provide copies of them as part of your application packet:

1) Your most recent Notification of Personnel Action, Standard Form (SF) 50-B, it doesn't matter what the reason for the SF 50-B is; the announcement will ask for the most recent. For the majority of employees, it will be the adjustment to basic salary that happens almost every January. However, it could be a promotion, reassignment, or some other action. Every time an SF 50-B is generated regarding your employment, you are sent a copy through inter-office distribution. You should be keeping all of them, preferably together, in an order useful to you.

2) Your most recent performance appraisal—this is the last official rating of record you received. For most of us that was the rating at the end of Fiscal Year 2004. For the rest of us, it is the last rating with an actual narrative rating assigned. Make sure it has a rating level checked and (electronic) signatures on it—another good thing to keep in your file with the SF 50-B.

Don't try sneaking in an old rating, the mid-year review, or your current performance work plan.

3) Your college transcripts. If you stopped taking classes ages ago, find it, shake the dust off, and file it with the other documents. If you are a continuing student, keep a copy of your most recent unofficial transcript handy. Grade reports and course schedules don't count as transcripts. While you don't have to submit an official transcript until you are selected for a position, the transcript you submit with your application does have to be issued by the college and have your name on it (don't laugh, most of the stuff you download using your student ID won't have your name on it).

If you don't know whether a document is acceptable or not, ask a member of the HR staff.

If you think your application package is ready to go, and aren't 100 percent sure, ask someone you trust to look through your package to see if all your paperwork is included. Of course, when this is being done at 4:00 p.m. on the last day to apply, you may not have time to "fix" anything. Back to the original point, get your documents in order now, submit your application before the end of the application period, and don't be afraid to ask someone else to check your application package.

Submitted by Jane Medina, Human Resources Manager, Salina SO

Paid Breaks

Notice there is no regulatory citation here. Why? Because there is no regulation or statute that says an employee is entitled to take a break. Custom? Well, that's a different issue. NRCS permits employees who work four continuous hours to take a break somewhere close to the mid-point

of that time...if and when workload permits. When workload doesn't permit...we work. Some of the things that require working without a break:

A customer is present—don't walk away from a customer.

A time-sensitive project to finish—if

you're on a deadline, finish it.

In a meeting or training—when others are investing their time in you, don't waste their time.

Volatile or hazardous materials—finish with it, secure it, don't leave dangerous items alone—EVER.

To some of us, these points sound like basic common sense. To others, it is just a reminder of how we work everyday. However, for others, this is surprising news. Nobody has a right to a break. Your customers, your co-workers, and your employer do have a right to expect you to finish the task at hand before you take a break. And, you as a customer of your co-workers should have the

same expectation. Breaks are a privilege, not an entitlement. When a break is taken, the person taking the break needs to keep it to no more than 15 minutes. Less than 15 minutes is OK—more than 15 minutes is not. If the preferred place and activity can't be reached and accomplished in 15 minutes, DON'T DO IT. Supervisors may feel it is necessary to prohibit an employee from taking a

break at all if this privilege is abused. Employees are on official time when on break and should conduct themselves accordingly. Don't tell naughty jokes, violate traffic rules, or indulge in other activity that is inappropriate.

Submitted by Jane Medina,
Human Resources Manager,
Salina SO

What's Happening

January 17, 2005

Holiday – Martin Luther King Day

January 24 & 25

No-Till On the Plains Winter Conference
Salina, KS

January 28 & 29

Kansas Cattlemen's Association (KCA) Annual Convention & Trade Show
Great Bend, KS

February

Black History Month

February 5 - 11

Society for Range Management Annual Meeting
Ft. Worth, TX

February 21

Holiday – Presidents' Day

March

Women's History Month

March 20

National Ag Day

March 22 - 24

Mid-America Farm Expo
Salina, KS

March 20 - 26

National Ag Week



Holiday Greetings 2004

*From a blazing eastern sky, a new day is born,
Welcoming this crisp, white December morn.
We cross the bridge and our sleigh seems to fly
As bare tree branches reach toward the amber-colored sky.
To share hugs and long chats 'round a fire's warm glow,
We hurry to see friends as we glide over the snow.
May this holiday remind you to cherish all you hold dear
And that your prayers will be answered in the coming new year.*

**The Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Office Employees Association**