



Kansas Highlights

April 2001

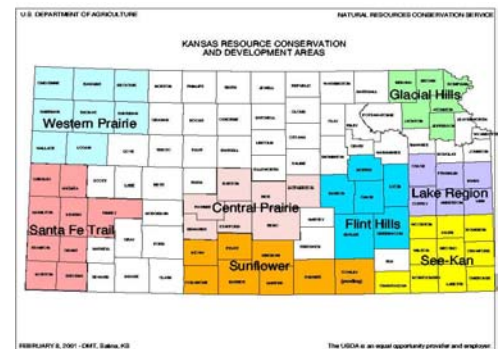
TWO RC&D'S APPROVED IN THE STATE

In January, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman designated 33 areas in 25 states as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Resource Conservation and Development Program.

In Kansas, two new RC&Ds were authorized. These include the Central Prairie in counties: Barton, Edwards, McPherson, Pawnee, Reno, Rice, Stafford and the Santa Fe Trail in counties: Finney, Grant, Greeley, Hamilton, Kearny, Morton, Stanton, Wichita, and Stevens.

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

Projects currently underway in the 315 existing RC&D areas across America are reducing soil erosion, improving water quality, enhancing recreational and tourism facilities, developing and diversifying local business opportunities, assisting child and elder care, and improving sewage treatment.



CUSTOMER SERVICE TOOLKIT TRAINING COMPLETE

When the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), now Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) first began using computerized conservation plans, Highly Erodible Land (HEL) compliance was a very large part of the workload. By 1990, there were more than 117,000 HEL plans in the Computer Aided Management and Planning (CAMPS) system. When the agency converted from CAMPS to the Field Office Computing System (FOCS) all of the compliance plans were transferred into the new system. Recent survey results estimate a large number of staff years are being used to maintain these records in FOCS.

But thanks to the Customer Service Toolkit (CST), NRCS will have a better way of doing business. Pilot testing and evaluation for CST was carried out in 30 selected field offices. As a result of this testing, plans were made to move forward with full implementation of CST.

For the last three months, Jeff Hart, Natural Resource Specialist, Salina SO, has been travelling the state and assisting area specialists in conducting extensive training throughout NRCS offices.



According to Hart, conservation plans are no longer needed on HEL to keep USDA participants eligible for benefits except for special situations (new determinations, sobdusting, reinstatement, etc). To be eligible, participants must now have an applied conservation system on the land. The system does not have to be the system that was planned, but can be any system that meets the compliance requirements. This means there is no requirement to bring all plans that have been applied in FOCS into the system.

ARCVIEW training will begin April 3 for area and field offices and should be completed by the end of July. For more information, contact Jeff Hart, Natural Resource Specialist, Salina SO, at 785-823-4539.

CERTIFICATION TRAINING UNDERWAY

All conservation planners in Kansas will be required to be certified to their particular level of planning expertise in accordance with National policy. Conservation plans developed after July 1, 2001, will require approval by a certified conservation planner.

Planner certification ensures planning accountability, assists in maintaining credibility and public trust of NRCS employees, and ensures competent and functional conservation planning, design, and application of conservation systems. All employees with conservation planning as part of their job descriptions will be certified as they complete the required training and have three plans reviewed that illustrate their planning abilities.

Re-certification will be required every three years to ensure that a high level of expertise is being maintained. *For more information, contact Jim Krueger, District Conservationist, Abilene, at 785-263-2787.*

NRCS EMPLOYEE HELPS OUT THOSE IN NEED

Some students from Anthony Elementary in Leavenworth are feeling a lot warmer these days thanks to some caring individuals. The idea for a coat drive began when a parent noticed that some students didn't seem to be dressing very warmly when walking to and from school. The parent, Regina Freeman, mentioned this to her husband Johnnie, and the couple decided to do something. "My heart went out to them," Johnnie said. Letters were sent home to parents asking them to donate what they could for the coat drive.

"About every class collected one or two coats," Johnnie said. He expected the coat drive to be a "minute or small" matter, but the students collected a total of 91 coats. The event became more than just a coat drive. Families donated clothing items in general and a canned food drive sponsored by the student council became part of the coat drive.

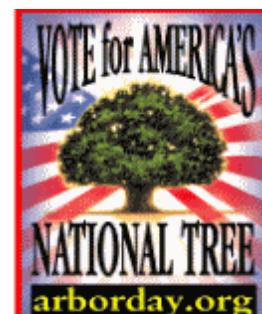
The Freeman's combined forces with the school's social worker and nurse who in turn contacted members from a fraternity at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth who tutor at Anthony and collected food and delivered baskets to some of the families.

Johnnie said he is pleased that so many people came together to help. He believes the students at Anthony now have a better understanding of how each person can make a difference. *For more information, contact Johnnie Freeman, Soil Conservationist, Leavenworth. Editor's Note: Parts of this article were taken from the Leavenworth Times.*

LET'S CHOOSE A NATIONAL TREE!

The bald eagle is the United States' National symbol; the "Star-Spangled Banner" is our National anthem. Yet, we have no National tree. The National Arbor Day Foundation is trying to change that. By logging onto www.arborday.org, folks are able to choose from a list of 21 tree candidates from which our National tree will be selected.

But hurry!! The final votes of this historic vote will be announced on National Arbor Day, the last Friday in April, April 27, 2001.



Write-in candidates also are accepted. If you do not have Web access, write **The National Arbor Day Foundation, Nebraska City, NE, 68410.**

AREA RECOGNIZED FOR APPRENTICE INITIATIVE

Tomas Dominguez, State Conservationist, presented the first "Above and Beyond" Award to Ken Hoffman, Assistant State Conservationist, Manhattan, for Area 4 support of the Kansas Natural Resources Apprentice Initiative (KNRAI). District conservationists in this area who mentored an apprentice(s) also received an eagle statuette paper-weight recognizing their contribution.

Area 4 received this award for having the most apprentices (8) enrolled in the Initiative during FY-2000.



Tomas Dominguez, State Conservationist (left) presents award to Ken Hoffman, Assistant State Conservationist, Manhattan and District Conservationists from Area 4. Clyde Mermis, DC, Lawrence; Lynn Thurlow, DC, Clay Center; James Marietta, DC, Oskaloosa; and Eldon Schwant, DC, Seneca.

This Award is a traveling trophy and will be awarded annually to the area with the most apprentices during the fiscal year. The KNRAI as a part of the Earth Team program works to increase student awareness of natural resources stewardship through interactive learning experiences and public and community service. *For more information, contact Mary Shaffer, Public Affairs Specialist, Salina SO, at 785-823-4571.*

EMPLOYEE RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

An employee suggestion has earned a Kansas employee national recognition. Paul Finnell, Soil Scientist, Salina SO, proposed the adoption of an electronic soil survey manuscript on CD-ROM for national use. His idea was referred to the NRCS Soil Survey Division (SSD) for evaluation and based on the substantial value and broad application of his suggestion has earned him a cash award and a Certificate of Merit signed by the Chief. Good job!!



KANSAS DAY CELEBRATED WITH PIZZA

The fourth grade students of Douglas County celebrated Kansas Day on January 29 by learning about the state's largest industry - agriculture. The 800 students felt the impact agriculture makes each time they ate their favorite food, a "Slice of Pizza."



Students were able to see, touch, and learn about grains grown for the crust, tomatoes for sauce, the dairy cows that give milk to make cheese, and even the pigs for pepperoni. Without the soils and water "slice," none of the pizza ingredients would have been possible. The students rotated through eight sessions every 15 minutes. A specific curriculum was followed throughout the day. It covered nutrition, safety, science, and history.

K-State Research and Extension, Douglas County Conservation District, Douglas County Farm Bureau, USD-497 Educators, 4-H Youth Leaders, FFA Youth Leaders, and local agriculture producers sponsored the event. *Submitted by Clyde Mermis, District Conservationist, Lawrence*

SPRING BREAK AND EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEERS

What comes to mind when you think of the words "Spring Break?" Many people think of college students partying on warm beaches at Padre Island or Daytona Beach. But many students have joined the "Alternative Break" program and are completing community service projects at locations across the country. Instead of spending time and money at popular vacation spots, these students will spend their semester breaks exploring issues that interest them.

At the University of Kansas, students are able to choose from community work projects that focus on topics such as hunger/homelessness, education, conservation, health/wellness, and cultural diversity.

Recently, a group of KU students wanting to volunteer for a conservation activity that would provide them an opportunity to improve their communication skills and serve as a team-building exercise contacted the local Douglas County Conservation District.

It was Soil Conservationist Coleen Davison, who contacted a Douglas County landowner scheduled to complete a tree planting. "This project involved hand planting approximately 2,300 seeds (tree nuts) and also moving some small tree seedlings from a nearby pasture to the planting site," explains Davison.

Besides Davison, eight volunteers and the landowner began planting the various types of tree nuts (Black Walnut, Bitternut Hickory, Burr Oak, and Red Oak). Throughout the day the volunteers frequently traded jobs and often asked questions about agriculture, wildlife biology, and forestry practices.



"We were able to complete a very large project in a short amount of time, and the landowner was extremely grateful to have received the extra help," said Davison. She adds, the volunteers were pleased to have been part of a local conservation project and were able to learn about related conservation topics while they were working. "Our field office benefited by developing new contacts with the Alternative Break Program so that future projects using student volunteers will also be possible." *Submitted by Coleen Davison, Soil Conservationist, Lawrence*

BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATED

As many know, February is designated as Black History Month. The theme for this year was "Creating and Defining the African-American Community: Family, Church, Politics, and Culture."

To celebrate, Kansas' Black Emphasis Program Manager Gwen Handcock, Erie, arranged for Duane Nelson to speak at the Salina State Office. Nelson, who has done extensive research on cattle towns, African-American cowboys, and life on the Chisholm Trail entertained the group of attendees with his knowledge on famous black cowboys of the Old West, as well as life on the Chisholm Trail and in a Kansas cattle town.



For more information on this speaker, contact Gwen Handcock at 316-244-3269. *Submitted by Sheila Forrester, Visual Information Specialist, Salina SO*

NRCS RECEIVES AWARD

In January, Tomas Dominguez, State Conservationist accepted an "Appreciation Award" on behalf of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association (KLICA) presented NRCS with a plaque in appreciation for providing educational opportunities in resources conservation at the Kansas 1998, 1999, and 2000 Environmental Expo's. Kudos!!



RC&D HOSTS LIVESTOCK AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

The Western Prairie RC&D held a Livestock and Resource Management Workshop in Colby on February 8. Four speakers provided their expertise in management of livestock and rangeland resources.

David Kraft, NRCS Area Rangeland Management Specialist, Emporia, provided information on the nutritional values in feeds and rangeland plant varieties. Dwayne Rice, NRCS State Range Specialist,

Salina SO, followed with information on drought and post-drought management of rangeland. He stressed plant condition is not to be taken lightly and that plant vigor is related to animal vigor and health.

A representative from a local accounting firm provided the group the importance of inventorying the resources within their management. Different managements used in agriculture were identified and statistical information was provided on each one. An eastern Colorado rancher concluded the day with how he has applied the concepts from the information provided to his ranch.

Sustainable agriculture will involve change for many farming operations. The Western Prairie RC&D hopes that programs such as these will keep farmers and ranchers in business and will sustain our rural communities. *For more information, contact Duane Cheney, RC&D Coordinator, Colby, at 785-462-2602.*

UPCOMING CONSERVATION EVENTS

April 16-22 - National Wildlife Week

Sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), a different theme is featured each year. This year's theme is "Explore Nature in Your Neighborhood." NWF's goal is to educate participants about wildlife conservation issues both globally and their own backyard. All materials and activities are available on the Internet at <http://www.nwf.org/wildlifeweek>

April 21 - Earth Day

Sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, celebration of environmental stewardship in American agriculture should not be overlooked. Although many offices plan activities around Earth Day, events can be held anytime throughout the year, visit <http://earthday> (yes, this really is the website).

April 22 – 28 – National Volunteer Week

Sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation this year's theme is "Change the World-VOLUNTEER!" This is a good time to recognize and celebrate the efforts of volunteers at the local, state, and national levels. Visit www.pointsofflight.org- click on Seasons of Service.

April 26, 27, 28 – 3I Show

The Finney County Conservation District will be participating in the 2001 3I Show held in Garden City this year. They will be having a booth, "Commonsense Conservation". Here, they will be promoting the 9-keys to conservation resource management. The 3I Show is your first-hand access to products, services, and information to keep you up-to-date with the latest farming and ranching innovations.

April 29 - May 6 - Stewardship Week

Sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), the 2001 theme is "Habitat for Life." The focus of this year's observance is on the personal responsibility each citizen has to be a good steward for the land, water, wildlife, and other natural resources that enhance our quality of life.

MAY - WETLANDS MONTH

May is American Wetlands Month and a good opportunity to make a difference by conserving wetlands in your community. By celebrating this month you are working to reverse the trend of wetland loss. Visit www.iwla.org. Pay a visit to the web sites. You will find them very helpful and easy to use. If you need help with some activities for any of the observances, the State Office Public Affairs Staff is available to assist you. *You may reach Deanne Lull, Office Assistant, Salina SO, at 785-823-4556.*

♦ Kansas Highlights is issued bi-monthly. 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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