



Kansas Highlights

April 2002

NEW STATE CONSERVATIONIST

Harold L. Klaege has been selected as the new State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Kansas. He will begin his new assignment April 21, 2002.



Harold Klaege, Kansas NRCS State Conservationist

Mr. Klaege brings more than 31 years of diverse experience to the Kansas natural resources conservation partnership. His experience in a variety of NRCS managerial and technical positions, including Planning Engineer and Hydrologist in Ohio and Water Resources Staff Leader, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Assistant State Conservationist for Land, and Assistant State Conservationist for Operations in Nebraska, has given him a well-rounded background. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Engineering from Ohio State University.

Mr. Klaege will be coming to Kansas from his current position as National Watershed Program Leader in Washington, D.C. He is looking forward to his new leadership responsibilities for NRCS programs, as well as becoming a member of the agriculture and conservation partnership team in Kansas. He hopes to meet and work with you in the near future.

Kansas NRCS welcomes both Harold and his wife, Becky.

BOY SCOUTS AND LITTLE BLUE RIVER PROJECT

A streambank stabilization project in northeast Kansas is recruiting the help of 300 Boy Scouts and their sponsors, plus 3 local high school FFA Chapter members to plant 12,600 trees and shrubs, 4,000 willow cuttings, and install 900 tree shelters on 10 different project sites. This project consists of 30 different project sites that will treat approximately 7 miles of eroding streambanks along the Little Blue River in Washington County. The work consists of shaping the streambank, installing rock bendway weirs in the stream channel, revegetating the shoreline with willow cuttings, and planting a 100-foot riparian forest buffer.

The streambank stabilization and rock bendway weirs are being funded through a grant from Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Some of the shoreline revegetation costs are being cost-shared through the State Conservation Commission's (SCC) Riparian and Wetland Protection Program. The riparian forest buffers have been enrolled in Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) and the Kansas Water Quality Buffer Initiative Program.



A "before" look of the Little Blue River in Washington County showing the steep vertical stream bank and erosion. From 1991 to 2001, a 10-year period, soil loss was estimated to be 423,016 tons.



An "after" look of the Little Blue River shows the rock installed to deflect the stream flow after completion of the construction work.

Phil Balch, SCC, has been instrumental in the development and design of this project. Once it became apparent of the landowner's interest, Phil began talking with KDHE about using this as a pilot project to see whether or not this type of streambank stabilization work would be cost effective to do on a river of this size.

Many different agencies have been involved in the implementation of this project. Participants include NRCS, SCC, KDHE, Farm Service Agency, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Fish and Wildlife Service, Westar Green Team, Washington County Conservation District, Washington High School FFA Chapter, Hanover High School FFA Chapter, Linn High School FFA Chapter, and Washington County Extension. In addition, tree planter machines for the April planting will be supplied from the Jewell County Conservation District, Mitchell County Conservation District, Ottawa County Conservation District, and the Little Blue Natural Resource District in Nebraska. *Submitted by Dee Minge, District Conservationist, Washington*

NRCS ASSISTS WITH LARGEST HIGHWAY PROJECT



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is known for its expertise in seedbed preparation and plant species selection for site-specific needs. Knowing this, Fred Markman, Project Landscape Architect with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), contacted the NRCS Topeka Field Office for assistance.

Markman related that KDOT was continuing to move to more native grass plantings, but had been disappointed with past results. As part of a multi-year, \$92 million highway project on the Kansas Turnpike in east Topeka, \$1.2 million were budgeted for landscaping (trees, shrubs, mulch, and irrigation systems) and \$250,000 for seeding. When spending a \$1,000 per acre for seeding, Markman wanted to develop better procedures in hopes of better results.

Highway construction projects are known to create soil erosion problems. Even with topsoiling, typical soil seedbed quality is poor. Therefore, soil tests were conducted on each planting area and a nutrient mix was developed with recommendations from Kansas State University Extension Service, Manhattan. From this, a short, medium, and tall mix of native grasses was developed to best suit each site.

Time will tell if the efforts will translate into improved results. But, every effort was made to consider soil, plant material, planting dates, and equipment to make it a success. If you travel through Topeka on the turnpike, keep a lookout for the developing stands. *Submitted by Dennis Brinkman, District Conservationist, Topeka*

“LESS MEANS MORE”, SAYS NO-TILL EXPERT

Money could not have been spent more wisely to turn around the farming traditions of area producers in southern Kansas. The Sumner County Crop Residue Alliance hosted a no-till expert, Rolf Derpsch, from Paraguay, to speak at their January meeting. Eighty-five producers turned out to hear Rolf, with many in the audience already seeing the benefits of crop rotation and soil quality first hand through no-till farming. For a county located in the “Plow Belt” of continuous wheat, especially in 1994, there has been a dramatic turn around.

Rolf spoke candidly about the fact that farmers in Paraguay do not have a government subsidy program, so if they can't turn a profit in farming, the land is sold to someone else. When the advantages of no-till were showcased many years ago in Paraguay, most of the farmers switched to no-till in short order. Today, 85 percent of the country's farmland is in no-till farming. Rolf made many producers think of their own no-till operations and for ways to improve or expand this technology on their farms.



Rolf Derpsch, Paraguay, speaking to a group of farmers on no-till

A special thanks to Bud Davis, NRCS Agronomist, Salina SO, and No-Till on the Plains Inc. for bringing Rolf to Kansas and the many communities he visited. *Submitted by Matt Markley, District Conservationist, Wellington*

AG ASSEMBLY CONNECTS KANSAS KIDS, CROPS, AND CRITTERS

The Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (KFAC) traveled to Council Grove in February, to present their newly developed math and science assembly program to 70 local Council Grove, Dwight, and White City third graders.

During the assembly, students participated in energetic pricing games similar to "The Price is Right" television game show. Knowing some basic math skills came in handy as they learned about the changing prices of Kansas' crops. Students participated in science demonstrations using different samples of wheat and flour. It was an entertaining program built around three main points: *Kansas farmers are smart, good at math, and use a lot of science.* The program promoted pride in Kansas agriculture with some youngsters who may have little or no knowledge of how their lives are touched by what is produced on Kansas farms.



Many agricultural groups across the state have endorsed this program. The Kansas Wheat Commission and the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission have provided valuable financial support to help develop this assembly. Local contributions were provided by the Morris County Conservation District, Morris County Farm Bureau, and a Flint Hills RC&D grant.

Contact the KFAC at 785-532-7946 for more information about the Agricultural School Assembly. Information is also available at www.ksagclassroom.org

Submitted by Jo Bea Titus, District Manager/Water Quality Coordinator, Council Grove

ANTHONY FIELD OFFICE PARTICIPATES IN "SHADOW" DAY

Employees at the Anthony Field Office had more than their own shadow following them around in February. Recently, eighth grade students, Justin McCartney, Harper Middle School and Kade Pulliam, Anthony Middle School, participated in "Shadow Day." This day is designated for Harper County students to select the workplace they would most like to visit to learn about career opportunities.

The students were exposed to topics such as: the soil survey and how it is made and used, different conservation practices and their purposes, conservation planning, including ArcView and Customer Service Toolkit planning tools, and how to use survey equipment.

The students have a list of questions they ask the employer and then submit a report to their instructor explaining what they learned from their experience. Who knows, by allowing these students the opportunity to participate in "Shadow Day," maybe they will be our future conservationists.

Submitted by Greg Bauer, District Conservationist, Anthony



MEETING THE TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD (TMDL) CHALLENGES FOR THE UPPER ARKANSAS RIVER WATERSHED

The Upper Arkansas Watershed is one of six priority watersheds in Kansas. Each priority watershed has a specialist working to develop awareness of the surface water quality issues and to encourage the adoption of BMP's (Best Management Practices) to improve water quality. Robert Frisbie, who is the

Upper Arkansas Watershed specialist, located at the Edwards County Extension Office in Kinsley, works closely with extension agents and district conservationists in the watershed to initiate water quality improvements.

Already, an advisory group of 28 persons is developing informational and educational tools to make people aware of the TMDL standards for the watershed. To date, the group has developed the following projects: a river friendly farm self-assessment event, letters explaining cost-share eligibility, and a video entitled, *Meeting the Water Quality Challenges*.

Producers and those located along targeted river segments in the watershed are being introduced to the need for BMP's that will help reduce bacteria in the river. These practices include buffer strips, livestock waste management systems, improved nutrient management, reducing livestock feeding sites near streams, and increased residue levels on cropland.

Persons wanting additional information about watershed educational activities or help in addressing their own BMP needs, can contact *Robert Frisbie, Upper Arkansas Watershed, Kinsley, at 620-659-2149*.

ET.....NOT JUST A MOVIE

What is **evapotranspiration**? The word is a combination of evaporation and transpiration, often referred to as **ET**, describing how much water crops use. ET must be balanced against rainfall and irrigation water received. The amount of ET is influenced by climatic factors, such as temperature, relative humidity, wind and solar radiation. Perhaps one of the biggest benefits of ET scheduling can come from helping determine when to start and end irrigation. This benefit can translate into increased economic returns through lower fuel bills or as increased yields due to fewer periods of crop stress.



Several farmers in Edwards County have implemented ET using the KanSched program, an ET based computer-scheduling program developed by Kansas State University. Since using this program, these local producers estimate saving 2 inches of irrigation water per season, resulting in less pumping costs. They also felt their crop yields were just as high as other similar fields not using the program. Another benefit noted was less crop loss due to drowning out in low-lying areas.

Overall, the KanSched program is a simple and user friendly computer program that can be quickly learned and easily used by irrigators to develop an irrigation schedule. By using ET scheduling, a producer's bottom line profit should increase as well as help address water quantity concerns, a win-win situation for everyone. *Submitted by Greg Henderson, District Conservationist, Kinsley*

CHIEF'S AWARD

The Fredonia NRCS Field Office and the Wilson County Conservation District have received the 2001 Kansas Earth Team Chief's Field Office Award. In January, Michele Eginoire, National Volunteer Coordinator, also notified the office that they received the Chief's Field Office Award for the Northern Plains Region. This award recognizes one office in each region for using volunteers to meet the USDA-NRCS mission.

The office used 18 volunteers for a total of 1,250 hours to carry out a variety of activities, including the following:



- Provided a plant identification and ecological value of the native prairie ecosystem for the state's largest wildflower tour held in Wilson County
- Conducted a water festival for over 100 children and their families in conjunction with Earth Day, titled "*Community Waters – We All Live Downstream*"
- Held a "Wildlife Tree Party" for 80 elementary students, emphasizing the interdependence of all living things
- Assisted with conservation planning and practice layout
- Carried out various clerical duties for the field office

Submitted by Steve Davied, District Conservationist, Fredonia

RC&D FORUM

The Kansas Association of RC&D Councils was well represented at the annual National Association of RC&Ds Leadership Forum. Twelve RC&D representatives and two NRCS RC&D coordinators attended the leadership forum in Washington D.C. held in February. The RC&Ds represented from Kansas were Flint Hills, Central Prairie, Santa Fe Trail, Western Prairie, and the pending, Coronado and Solomon RC&Ds.

During the forum, information from various partners on the national scene and training in educating senate and congressional representatives about the purpose, projects, and actions from RC&Ds across the nation was discussed. Thanks were given to our representatives in approving an additional 20 new RC&D areas across the nation. To date, there are 368 RC&D areas. Requests were made for permanent authorization in the farm bill language and additional funding that could include additional new RC&D areas.



Presently, it has been documented that on the average, for every dollar of federal money invested in RC&Ds, five dollars are returned. *Article submitted by Duane Cheney, Western Prairie RC&D Coordinator, Colby*

STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN MINI CONSERVATION TOURS

Fifth and sixth grade students in Sherman County participated in “mini” conservation tours in January. Students were introduced to actual field application and/or installation of various conservation practices. They witnessed first hand the resource benefits that can be achieved and how practices look on the landscape.

The “mini” tours focused on various topics: terraces, Conservation Reserve Program, native rangeland, chemical tillage and strip cropping, sprinkler irrigation, wildlife habitat, and windbreaks. One main topic was presented along with the supporting practices being discussed. *Submitted by Fred Wedel, District Conservationist, Goodland*

INTERESTING TALK

The Stafford County Conservation District has always had interesting annual meetings. This year they did something different, and did it spark some interest. Speaking at this year's meeting was Bob Mosier, Kiowa County Commissioner, Economic Development Board member, and President of the Sunflower RC&D Area. His presentation was how to turn wind into economic development. As quoted by Pam Martin, editor of St. John News, "Stafford County's windy days may turn from a nuisance to a blessing."

Mosier spoke of a wind farm project in Kiowa County by Clipper Energy. The wind farm will have 70 towers, 100 meters tall, producing 1500 kilowatts each. These are much larger than the towers installed at the Montezuma (Gray County) wind farm which only produce 660 kilowatts each.

Wherever wind farms are built, there must also be transmission lines to transport the electricity to the market. Right now, Stafford County has two such lines, one north-south line, and another east-west line. Landowners benefit from long-term land leasing, and local towns benefit from lower energy costs.

Presentations like this definitely show the benefit of conservation districts and their commitment to improving the quality of life for all citizens. *Submitted by John Drew, District Conservationist, St. John*

UPCOMING CONSERVATION EVENTS

April 21 – 27- National Volunteer Week

April 22 – 28 - National Wildlife Week

April 22 - Earth Day

April 28 – May 5 - Soil Stewardship Week

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