

HARPER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

JANUARY 2009

FREE REGISTRATION

The Harper County Conservation District will sponsor up to ten landowners to attend for the first time the No-Till on the Plains Winter Conference in Salina, KS on Jan 27-28, 2009.

At the conference, about one dozen current no-till producers from across the USA will offer presentations on their experiences. In addition, another dozen no-tillage experts – some of the world's foremost authorities in no-tillage systems – will engage the crowd. You will have the opportunity to visit with other no-tillers from various regions, ask questions, share trade secrets and interact with other attendees, participants and presenters.

Act now! You must pre-register by January 15, 2009. Register online at <http://www.no-till.com/>. For more information contact the District at 842-5910. Funding is provided by the State Conservation Commission through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund.

COST-SHARE SIGN-UP

**Sign-up April 1 through
April 30 for cost-share.**

The Harper County Conservation District will be taking applications for cost-share assistance from the Non-Point Source Pollution Program (NPS) and the Water Resources Cost-Share Program (WRCSP) beginning April 1 and lasting until April 30.

Signing up does not guarantee approval for cost-share assistance. All requests will be ranked according to State Conservation Commission priorities. Funds for cost-share will be limited. No application will be approved prior to July 1, 2009. To be eligible for assistance, your application must be approved by the State before beginning any practice.

Funding provided by the State Conservation Commission through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Debbie Francis, Dusty Albright, Bruce Miller,
Dan Cartmill, & Matt Goertz

ADVISORS

Sid Burkholder & Gerald Schmidt

OFFICE PERSONNEL

Timothy Clark, District Manager

Terry Hodgson, District Conservationist

Chris Hoskinson, Conservation Technician

Misty McFarlane, District Secretary

Kayla Bryant, Buffer Coordinator

It is the policy of the Harper County Conservation District to prohibit discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, political belief, or marital status.

EQIP and WHIP Cutoff Dates Extended

“The signup cutoff date has been extended to **Friday, January 30, 2009**, for both the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program through NRCS. It promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

Kansas Identifies Priority Natural Resource Concerns

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Kansas EQIP eligible priority natural resource concerns are as follows:

- Air Quality – Objectionable Odors
- Domestic Animals – Inadequate Stock Water
- Fish and Wildlife – Threatened and Endangered Species, Declining Species, and Species of Concern
- Plant Condition – Noxious or Invasive Plants; Productivity, Health, Vigor (Forestland, Rangeland, Pastureland, Hayland)
- Soil Condition – Organic Matter Depletion
- Soil Erosion – Streambank
- Water Quality – Excessive Nutrients/Organics in Ground and/or Surface Water; Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water; Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground and/or Surface Water
- Water Quantity – Aquifer Overdraft; Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land; Inefficient Water Use on Non-irrigated Land; and Insufficient Flows in Water Courses

WHIP

The WHIP is a voluntary program through NRCS for producers who want to develop or improve wildlife habitat on private lands.

FY 2009 Kansas WHIP wildlife priorities are as follows:

- Threatened and endangered species and species in need of conservation
- Grassland Birds
- Natural Communities

Apply at Local NRCS Office

Producers may apply at the local NRCS office located at 803 N Fanning Drive, Anthony, KS. If you have any questions, please phone 620-842-5483.

What Is the

Wetlands Reserve Program?

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is the Nation’s premier wetlands restoration program. It is a voluntary program that offers landowners the means and the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the program as well as provides technical and financial support to help landowners who participate in WRP.

Wetlands Reserve Program:

- Is a voluntary program offered nationwide.
- Offers payment, based on the agricultural value, for wetlands that have previously been drained and converted to agricultural uses.
- Pays up to 100 percent reimbursement for restoration costs.
- Lets landowners retain control of access, no public access is required.
- Lets landowners maintain ownership of land: they have the right to hunt, fish, trap, and pursue other appropriate recreational uses.
- Allows for land, including any easement, to be sold.
- Provides additional benefits for the entire community:
 - improved water quality
 - enhanced habitat for wildlife
 - reduced soil erosion
 - reduced flooding
 - improved water supply

Landowner Options

WRP offers three options to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and associated uplands: permanent easements, 30-year easements, or 10-year restoration cost-share agreements.

How To Enroll

Landowners may sign up any time at the local NRCS office or USDA Service Center. Periodically during the year, NRCS will rank all eligible applications and submit them to the agency’s national office for funding consideration.

NEW EMPLOYEE

The Harper County Conservation District has hired a new Secretary

Misty McFarlane

Born in Arkansas City, KS

Married to Marc in 1997

**Two children: Daughter, Aubrey (10),
and Son Rhett (4)**

Marc is employed by K&K Diesel



**Pictured left to right : Rhett, Aubrey (Front)
Marc, Misty (Back)**

A poster for a conference. At the top left is a logo featuring a stylized purple flower or plant. To the right of the logo, the text reads "WOMEN MANAGING THE FARM" in blue. Below that, in larger blue letters, is "THE CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURE". Underneath that is "FEBRUARY 12-14, 2009". At the bottom, in smaller blue text, is "GRAND PRAIRIE HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER" and "1400 NORTH LORRAINE STREET, HUTCHINSON, KANSAS". The background of the poster is a textured, golden-brown color resembling straw or hay.

Ag Conference Slated for Women

The 2009 Women Managing the Farm Conference has been scheduled for February 12-14, 2009, at the Grand Prairie Hotel and Convention Center in Hutchinson, Kansas. Themed "The Changing Face of Agriculture," the annual conference provides tremendous opportunities for women who are involved in agriculture to come together and network with other women who have similar interests and challenges.

This year's conference will focus on five areas, including legal, financial, production, price and human risk. The event will feature four keynote speakers from Oklahoma State University, K-State Research and Extension, and Nebraska. In addition to the primary speakers, 25 breakout sessions and a tradeshow will be offered.

Any woman who is involved in agriculture as a profession, producer, farm partner, or landowner can benefit from this conference. The cost to attend the conference is \$90, and includes all sessions, conference materials, two lunches, and one breakfast.

For registration and more conference information, go to www.togpartners.com/wmf or www.womenmanagingthefarm.info/Home.aspx or call 1-866-FARMKSU (327-6578). The Grand Prairie Hotel and Convention Center has a limited number of rooms at a discounted conference rate. For reservations and more information on rooms, contact the hotel at the toll-free number, 1-800-362-5018. **The Harper County Conservation District is offering four scholarships covering registration on a first-come basis. Please call the District office at 620-842-5910.**

Kansas Association of Conservation Districts Opposes Consolidation Measure

The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts has taken a clear stand against a move to consolidate the State Conservation Commission (SCC) with the Kansas Department of Agriculture. At its annual convention in Wichita in November, KACD unanimously passed a resolution urging state lawmakers to oppose any legislation or action that seeks to merge the SCC with the Ag Department.

The resolution came about in response to a recent legislative post audit review of a possible SCC-KDA merger to achieve approximately \$300,000 in cost savings, mostly from a reduction in staff. A bill is expected to be introduced in the 2009 Kansas Legislature that paves the way for the consolidation, reversing the action of the 1937 legislature that established SCC as a stand-alone agency whose entire focus is on the preservation of soil, water, and related resources.

“The loss in services to Kansas conservation and watershed districts could be enormous,” said KACD Executive Director Pat Lehman. “Instead of having a high degree of local control and access to the hands-on assistance from expert SCC staff that they’ve relied on for 71 years, they may be faced with reduced funding and fewer personnel to help them implement their conservation programs.”

Since its inception, the SCC has administered Conservation District Law and works closely with the 105 county conservation districts in managing state-funded cost-share programs. The 525 locally elected supervisors select five members of the nine-member SCC Board of Commissioners from their own ranks, which ensures that the governing body has a thorough knowledge of conservation practices specifically tailored to each region and the needs of the state’s diverse rural and urban districts. Under a consolidation, the SCC Board of Commissioners could become an advisory group rather than maintain its traditional role.

“The current system has worked efficiently and effectively for seven decades,” said Lehman. “This is potentially the biggest threat to locally led conservation in the long history of Kansas conservation districts.” He added that shifting SCC to the Ag Department also has the potential to impact landowners’ ability to receive conservation cost-share grants.

KACD will hold “Conservation Day in the Capitol” on January 20th. Conservation district supervisors and managers from across the state, as well as members of watershed districts, will travel to Topeka to urge lawmakers to oppose the consolidation. If you cannot attend, farmers, operators and rural landowners are encouraged to write or call their legislators prior to the opening of the 2009 legislative session on January 12th. For more information, visit the KACD website at www.kacdnet.org.

Earth Team Volunteers - What can I do?

In the year 2008, Kansas had 3,610 citizens volunteer their time and talents for NRCS and the Conservation District. These volunteers donated 40,948 hours. More than a few of these people were first time volunteers and probably thought, "What can I do?" Well, no matter your talents, interests, age or physical ability, there is a volunteer opportunity for you. Here are a few examples:

- Schools benefit from tours, exhibits, poster contests, and festivals. Volunteers are needed to help organize events, conduct classes, take pictures, cook food, write news articles and chaperon students on the bus. And lastly, one of the most appreciated jobs a volunteer can do is just become a helper to support staff and save them time and steps.
- Town and community groups benefit from educational meetings and publications. Volunteers are needed to present programs and speak about conservation issues. Volunteers with writing experience can produce publications and artwork.
- Field office support is needed. This can include opportunities assisting with monthly newsletters, judging poster and essay contests, phone and office support when staff is not available and lastly clerical assistance to help organize and file.
- Working in the outdoors presents many other opportunities for volunteers. Outdoor activities include assisting the professional staff as they work directly with farmers and ranchers. Volunteers can take notes and assist with survey equipment, make natural resource inventories and assist in improving wildlife habitats. It is important to preserve habitat for pheasant, quail, prairie chicken and many other native wildlife species that reside on farms and ranches.
- Other outdoor activities which need volunteer assistance are the planning of community beautification and projects for water quality and erosion control. Volunteers are greatly appreciated and can be the essential link in developing programs which benefit their own community. Becoming a member of your local Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Advisory Council is one way of seeing a need and having the opportunity to fix the problem and change your own community for the good.
- Volunteers are needed and appreciated. If you would like to join other Kansas residents who already donate their time to conserve and protect our natural resources, please contact your local NRCS and District Conservation Service Centers.

EXPIRING CRP

*Submitted by
Chris Hoskinson, Technician*

My Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres are expiring. What should I do? This question is being asked throughout the county this year and will be heard for several more years to come. The 2008 Farm Bill allows for 32 million acres or approximately 2.7 million less acres in CRP than are currently enrolled nationally. This reduction in acres will likely come about through the attrition of expiring general CRP contracts.

The time to begin thinking about how to utilize these acres is at least a year before the contract expires. At the individual landowner/operator level, the issues are usually economics and desired land uses. Both of these individual issues can also be very complex to evaluate. A good way to handle hard and complex issues is try to simplify them.

Am I or my operator in a position to return this established grass stand to cultivation and make a profit growing grain? If so, will all of the acres generate a profit? Most tracts of land in Kansas contain both good, fertile farm ground and infertile, unprofitable acres. Some of the areas are just hard to get to. If returning the tract to cultivation is your decision, why not just farm the good acres and leave those non-profitable acres in grass? After all, there are some uses for grass. Many times we think that farming the whole quarter is the most economical process. The truth is with today's high production costs, every acre has to pay its own way or it simply isn't worth it.

Then there's the concern with erosion. Some of the acres put into the program simply should not have been sod busted to begin with. Environmental benefits should also be considered when planning for the future.

The Continuous CRP (CCRP) offers some opportunities to re-enroll parts of expiring general CRP acres into the CCRP. These are usually parts of the field that are not profitable to farm, so why not receive CCRP benefits on these acres? The CCRP is generally practice specific and not big chunks of a field. This will require planning to see what would suit your needs the best.

Many expiring contracts also contain those areas called "wet spots" or "sloughs." In reality, these areas are harvested once in a while even though money is expended every year to farm them. They definitely are not profitable to farm. There are also several options to enroll these areas in programs that will make them profitable.

If the desired land use is to graze these acres, planning needs to start now. In many cases there are management practices that should and need to be applied before contract expiration to enhance and maintain the grazing quality. There are also several cost-share opportunities for water development and cross-fencing. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel are available to assist with grazing advice for these acres. These decisions take time to plan and implement, so start now!

**HARPER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
803 FANNING DRIVE
ANTHONY, KANSAS 67003-2866**

**BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Anthony, KS 67003
Permit No. 22**



Everyone is invited to attend the annual meeting and dinner at Chaparral High School on Monday, February 16. The meal is courtesy of the Harper County Banks. Serving begins at 5:30 PM and the business meeting will start at 6:30 PM. We are requesting that reservations be made for the dinner by filling out the reservation slip at the bottom of this page. Return it with \$1.00 deposit for each adult (18 years and over) to: Harper County Conservation District, 803 Fanning Drive, Anthony, Kansas, 67003. Children are welcome.

PRIZES – The banks are offering four \$50 savings bonds. To be eligible for the drawing of the bonds, reservations must be received at the Conservation District Office by 4:30 PM on February 12, 2009. This enables us to make reservations with the caterer. *You must be present to win.*

An election will be held for two supervisor positions. 2008 Conservation awards will be presented and recognition will be given to past winners. Entertainment to be announced.

.....**CLIP & RETURN BY WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009**.....

Please make _____ adult and _____ children reservations for the Bankers Dinner and Conservation District Annual Meeting on Monday, February 16, 2009.

NAMES _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____