conserving natural resources *for our future*

Butler County Conservation District
75th Annual Edition

January 2021

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KANSAS BANKERS ASSOCIATION AWARD SOIL CONSERVATION

2020 Key Banker Award for Soil Conservation

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Dwight and Kate Claassen & Family

PLEASE NOTE CHANGES TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING DUE TO THE ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC!!

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, our Annual Meeting will be different this year. As required by State law, we will hold our business meeting to provide the public with an annual financial report, report of conservation activities and hold an election for expiring terms of Supervisors Walter Burress and Linda Klaassen.

For the health and safety of everyone, we will not have a dinner or provide entertainment as we have in the past. The County Key Banker and Conservation District Supervisors will present the Banker Award and Grassland Award to the Claassen Family and the Jones Family at a later date.

In order to comply with state and local COVID-19 guidelines, and for guidelines set by The Benton Church, RSVP's will be required for relaying that information to attendees.

2020 Grassland Award

Haywire Cattle Company

Andy and Callie Jones & Family
Randy and Kim Jones

Our Thanks to Butler County Banks for Sponsoring the Key Banker Award!

Next time you visit your bank, please thank them for supporting agriculture in Butler County.

American Ag Credit

American State Bank & Trust Company

Citizens Bank of Kansas

Commerce Bank

Community National Bank

Emprise Bank

Intrust Bank

Vintage Bank Kansas

White Eagle Credit Union

Kansas Bankers Association
2020 Soil Conservation Award
Prairie Meadows Farm – Dwight and Kate Claassen and Family

Prairie Meadows Farm (Dwight and Kate Claassen and family) of Whitewater are the recipients of the 2020 Key Banker Award for Soil Conservation sponsored by the Kansas Bankers Association.

Photo Courtesy Dwight Claassen

Prairie Meadows Farm consists of row crops, hay and livestock. They have 400 acres of cropland and they raise corn, wheat, milo and soybeans in addition to planting cover crops on a yearly basis. They also have 620 acres of grass that's grazed (prairie hay and brome) and they manage another 280 acres. They bale small square bales of brome and native grass for the horse, sheep and goat markets. They also grow Walnut and Pecan trees for veneer lumber and they have bee hives from which they get honey and honeycomb.

Dwight has been using no-till on his farm for 18 years. He defines his no-till operation as minimal disturbance of the soil.

Cover crops have become the backbone of their farm operation and crop rotations. Dwight mentioned he has more livestock than he can count…all under the ground! They attempt to keep something green in the fields at all times to benefit those underground livestock which in turn benefits the cash crop.

Cover crops help with raising organic matter, they reduce weed pressure, lower water evaporation during the growing months and eliminate erosion by water and wind. Legumes planted in the cover crop mix can reduce the amount of nitrogen they need to buy and apply to the crops.

Last year they added a Yetter Devastator cover crop roller to their planter and planted green into five-foot tall rye. The rolling crimped and killed the majority of the rye but they still had to terminate with a chemical application. The benefit of rolling the cover crop was that the rye didn't wrap up on all the moving parts of the planter and they were able to use the spading wheels they preferred on the planter.

Photo Courtesy Dwight Claassen

They find that rye as a cover does wonders for control of winter annuals and fall emergent weeds and they have been able to eliminate most of their fall herbicide applications. In addition, at boot stage, the carbon ratio of rye allows it to become a mulch that will last well beyond the following cash crop.

Conservation practices Prairie Meadows Farm has implemented include no-till, cover crops, terraces, waterways and grade stabilization structures. They have taken advantage of federal and state cost share programs, including the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the state Water Resources Cost share program through Butler County Conservation District. He commented these programs are an incentive to try new methods that they continue to practice in some form in their farming operation even after their contracts expire. Dwight commented, "NRCS has been essential and instrumental in the changes we have made and continue to make in our operation. I think everyone should try and utilize the information and financial support that comes with the various programs available."

Dwight believes pasture health is influenced by good management of the pastures and being flexible to weather conditions. Intensive grazing management is used on the pastures. They let the grass get a good start before cattle are turned out in spring. They generally pull cattle off grass by mid-July. He said flexible contracts with their renters allows them to keep cattle on grass longer if more rainfall occurs later in the summer to take advantage of the extra growth. Likewise, if there is lack of rainfall, cattle come off sooner. He said it's important for owners to take on risk along with the renter to assure pasture conditions do not suffer.

Continued on page 3

Kansas Bankers Award—*(continued from page 2)*

Dwight mentioned they prefer not to burn pastures. On their hay meadows, burning negatively impacts their yields. Renters do not insist they burn and they don't feel burning helps with the weeds they need to control, and in the case of Sumac, makes the problem worse.

Dwight says they are willing to try about any practice that improves the soil structure, crop yield or that cuts inputs. He says with small acreage and equipment, it's a lot easier to experiment. They have always applied fertilizer into the soil rather than on top of the soil so they continue to make upgrades to their planter for that purpose. They also have been thinning trees along fields with creeks to promote the growth of deep-rooted hardwoods with the added benefit of increasing light to the cash crop.

In the future, they are looking to incorporate strip intercropping. Strip intercropping is where multiple crops are grown in narrow, adjacent strips that allow interaction between different species but also allow management with modern equipment and results in substantial yield increases.

Wildlife also benefit at Prairie Meadows Farm. Their cover crops provide food for the micro-organisms living in the soil, and food and cover for wildlife and beneficial insects such as the Lacewing. The family has also planted a windbreak and wildlife runways of Fragrant Sumac. They plan to plant an additional 500 Sumac which are currently on order. Trees and brush cut from field borders are piled up along edges of fields for wildlife habitat and protection. They also have pheasant on order with plans for feeding and watering stations in the hopes that their numbers will increase.

Soybeans planted into rolled ryegrass cover

Dwight recently got back into beekeeping after a long hiatus. Dwight mentioned it's been 45 years since he's seen a wild swarm of bees-he hopes to change that. He found useful information on the internet which inspired him to dramatically change how he manages his hives. He allows hives to produce queens and swarm as needed. He has swarm traps strategically placed and when bees swarm the hope is they will go to the swarm traps. He relocates the bees into horizontal hives rather than the traditional vertical hives.

Dwight considers Prairie Meadows Farm as an experimental farm that turns a profit rather than a "hobby farm" as some people may consider them. He says they are proof that a small farm can thrive, contrary to popular opinion, even without every government payment that is offered.

Dwight and Kate have 4 sons and 7 grandchildren. Son Tanner helps Dwight with the farming operation full time and is the 4th generation on the original farm. Their son Seth is an anesthetist, Dustin is a network engineer and Jesse is an electrical engineer. When not farming or modifying farm equipment, Dwight enjoys restoring an AC 7000 Scout, Roadster, Trans Am WS6 and various bikes.

Prairie Meadows Farm will continue to look for ways to improve their farming operation in the future. Dwight says, "We should not be satisfied with simply maintaining our soils. Our soil should be viewed as a breathing, living entity. There is more life in a teaspoon of soil that there are people on the earth, and as stewards of the land, we should endeavor to pass it on in better shape that we received it."

The 2020 Soil Conservation Award is sponsored by the Kansas Bankers Association.

Congratulations, Prairie Meadows Farm!

What is Community Supported Agriculture?

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a growing movement in America, which has provided economic support and predictability to farmers, practicing traditional family farming, that they will be able to continue to farm, and that communities will be able to enjoy fresh, local farm products. Partnering with local farms by purchasing a "share" in the season's harvest, consumers can know where their food is coming from and have the satisfaction of supporting local agriculture.

Participants, who purchase their shares early in the season, provide the farmer with a stable income, and in return they receive a weekly supply of fresh local farm products. This concept of Community Supported Agriculture was introduced into the United States in 1985 by *Robyn Van En*, who learned of the concept from a Swiss friend, Jan Vander Tuin.

Visit a local farmer's market and you will most likely find a local CSA vendor.

2020
Grassland Award

Haywire Cattle Company
Andy and Callie Jones & Family ~ Randy and Kim Jones

Andy and Callie Jones own, operate and manage Haywire Cattle Company. Andy's Dad Randy and Mom Kim are also involved in the operation. Kim recently retired from a job in town and Randy doesn't spend as much time at the ranch now which leaves Andy and Callie the task of the day to day ranch operations. Currently, the ranch is run by the family with some part time help used during their busy seasons.

Randy, Kim, Callie & Andy Jones and twins
Laycie and Kendall

Randy and Kim's first cattle facility was located just south of El Dorado. They outgrew that site and land was purchased east of the El Dorado airport to move to which also allowed them to expand their operation. Haywire Cattle Company was the name chosen for the new operation.

Andy mentioned the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was a useful tool when it came to developing the plans for their new site and in working with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

NRCS surveyed the new site and provided designs and maps that showed exactly where everything should be placed.

NRCS was instrumental in helping Andy and Randy through the permitting process for their operation through KDHE. They also received cost share through the State Non-Point Source Pollution Control Livestock Waste Management Program for upgrading their facility.

Haywire runs cattle on owned and leased land that is scattered across several counties. They run yearlings on grass in addition to having a cow herd that calve in the spring.

The crop ground is owned and leased, which is custom farmed by an area farmer. The ground is used for manure management and growing silage to service the yard. Manure is spread in a 3 year rotation. In addition, it is planted to cover crop in the fall for grazing, where a 15% increase in production, measured through gain, has been noted with the incorporation of the manure.

Haywire Cattle Company is proud of the fact that they still use horses to work their cattle. Andy says it's less

stressful on the cattle which is a cost savings in the long run. In addition, the cattle can be observed in more detail from the seat of a saddle versus a 4-wheeler to catch health problems. Most importantly, the overall condition of the pastures can be monitored more easily for grazing management. It's important to have boots on the ground. Andy believes seeing the pastures and the cattle on horseback is the most effective way to monitor their livestock operation.

Andy manages the grass as an investment and understands that the grass he relies on for his cattle belongs to a bigger ecosystem. When the grass is managed properly, the whole ecosystem, including soil, water and wildlife resources, benefits.

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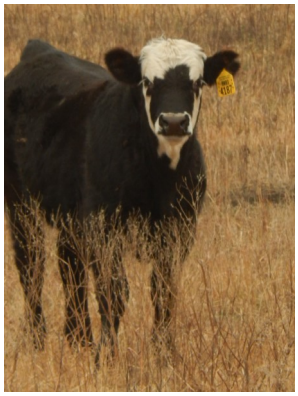
Grassland Award—*(continued from page 4)*

Cattle stocking rates are based on several factors. He only includes grazeable acres in the pastures to set stocking rates and considers the productivity of the pasture and overall health of the grass in each pasture. He doesn't use a "one size fits all" stocking rate. He goes by the weight of the animals, not by a textbook rule of thumb number of animals. He stocks each pasture based on the pastures' unique conditions, including soil type and past management practices, which require different stocking rates.



Burning is an important tool used to control weeds and brush and increase grass productivity. Pastures are burned on a rotation each year. If a pasture is burned two weeks early one year, they make sure to burn it a little later the next year. They have their own fire equipment to assure fires don't get away from them. Neighbors help neighbors during burn season and other busy times during the year. It's just the way things are done in the ranching community and everyone benefits.

One change Andy has seen over the years is that the margins are smaller and the volume is larger. So much goes into the management of inputs, equipment and labor just to make a profit. That, along with urban sprawl, increased liability and the scrutiny ranchers (and agriculture in general) face due to lack of education by non-farm neighbors can be frustrating. It boils down to most people are so far removed from agriculture today they don't have an awareness or appreciation for what it takes to put food on their table. One example of this is most people don't understand the need to burn pastures.

Andy has a degree in Business Management from Friends University; however, most of what he has learned about farming and ranching he has gleaned from the older generation and being out in the pastures and working with cattle. While textbooks and school have their place he says, "nothing compares to "hands on" experience".

He relies on the wisdom and experience of his Dad, friends and neighbors who have "been there and done that"; however, he does challenge the older generation to be open to new ideas and to try new things.

Andy recalls when he was a freshman in high school, the Conservation District provided a scholarship for him to attend Range Youth Camp. He came home with some ideas about stocking rates and suggested to his Dad that they needed to put more cattle on some pastures.

He said his Dad about jumped out of his boots with that suggestion, but when Andy explained the reasoning behind it, his Dad was more accepting and allowed him to try it on some of their pastures.

Stewardship of the land is so important for Haywire Cattle Company. Andy has learned there can be a fine line in ranching and it can take just a short amount of time to wreck the balance between land that is productive and land that has been abused. It may take years or even a lifetime to repair the damage. That's why it's so important to listen to others who have experience, who have been through situations before and can share their wisdom and knowledge.

Andy and Callie have 7-year old twins Laycie and Kendall who are already involved with helping on the ranch working cattle and burning pastures. The girls are both active in ranch rodeos, barrel racing and basketball. His wife Callie is right out there with the rest of them working pens and doctoring cattle every day. Andy does find time to serve on the Butler County Planning Commission.

While ranching is something the family loves, at the end of the day, it's not a hobby, it's a business and it's what pays the bills. They know smart decisions, the responsible use of the natural resources they have been entrusted with, and their faith in God will allow them to continue to make a living off the land and doing what they love.

The 2020 Grassland Award is sponsored by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts Grasslands Committee and Sharp Brothers Seed Company.

Congratulations, Haywire Cattle Company!

"If you can't be in awe of Mother Nature, there's something wrong with you."
~ Alex Trebek

"Time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once."
~ Woody Allen

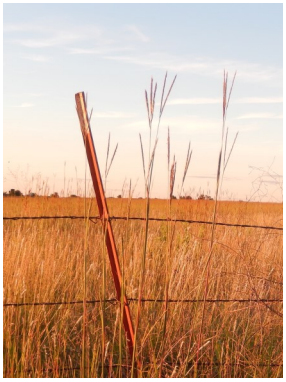
Range Youth Camp Scholarships Available!

Attention upcoming high school sophomores, juniors and seniors with an interest in rangeland management—Each year the Conservation District offers scholarships to attend the week long Range Youth Camp sponsored by the Kansas Section Society for Range Management.

The camp is June 15—18, 2021 at Camp Mennoscah near Murdock, Kansas in Kingman County.

During this week long camp, students will learn to identify rangeland plants, determine plant growth and stocking rates, discuss livestock nutrition, rangeland wildlife management and much more!

There will be a special field trip and a steak and potato dinner provided during the week long camp.



Fun activities are also scheduled and include swimming, canoeing, fishing and hiking.

Tuition is $250. The Conservation District offers full scholarships to students who attend from Butler County.

Contact the District Office for more information, 316-320-3549.

Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Determinations

Jeff Parks, DOC Technician
El Dorado Field Office

Landowners and/or Operators, if you are participating in government programs and are unsure if your land has an HEL determination or Wetland determination, you should contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

If you have plans to create a new drainage system, do land leveling, filling, dredging or land clearing of trees, an AD-1026 form will need to be completed with the FSA office.

If there are questions regarding tree removal or hydric soil, check with NRCS while you are visiting with FSA.

The best plan is to have the HEL and Wetland determination completed before starting your projects.

A copy of Form AD-1026 can be found online at:
www.fsa.usda.gov/ad1026form

AD-1026
(10-30-14)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FarmServiceAgency

HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND CONSERVATION (HELC) AND WETLAND CONSERVATION (WC) CERTIFICATION

Sign Up Now for Financial Assistance in Implementing Conservation Practices on Your Farm or Ranch Cost Share Sign-Up—January 1 to April 30

Controlling soil erosion on your farm or ranch can be expensive. That's why financial assistance is made available to local landowners through the State Water Plan Fund. The Conservation District administers these funds for Butler County. Funds are provided to landowners who qualify based upon state criteria and local program requirements set forth by the Conservation District.

Landowners who are interested in receiving financial assistance need to fill out an application before April 30, 2021 to be considered for our next round of funding that we receive in July 2021. Applications received by April 30th are prioritized and ranked based on a number of factors. These include the type of practice to be implemented, whether the practice is located in a high priority watershed and location of practice to sensitive areas such as perennial or intermittent streams, wells or public water supplies. Applications that rank high are funded first.

Conservation practices eligible for cost share include: grassed waterways, terraces, underground outlets, diversions, pasture and hayland planting, range seeding, sediment control basins, wetland creation, filter strips, ponds, watering facilities, fencing, plugging abandoned water wells, upgrading livestock waste systems and repairing failing septic systems. A complete list of guidelines and eligible practices can be obtained at the conservation office.

All cost share practices must meet NRCS Standards and Specifications in order for cost share to be paid.

If you have some erosion issues, call us or stop by and talk to us. We can pull up a map on the computer to discuss areas in your field(s) that concern you and then come out to the field and with your help, determine the best way to solve an erosion problem. It costs you nothing to ask or have us come out and look. We can provide some estimates on cost so you can make a determination on whether you want to proceed with the project.

For more information on the cost share program, eligibility, or a complete list of practices that can be funded with cost share, contact Sandy Koontz at the Conservation District office, 316-320-3549.

Butler County Conservation District is 75!

The "Dirty Thirties" prompted the U S Government to pass the Soil Conservation Act in 1935 which renamed the Soil Erosion Service, established in 1933, to the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service).

Congress encouraged states to pass their own conservation district law which opened the door for the establishment of conservation districts in the United States. Kansas legislature passed the Conservation District Law in 1937.

In 1944, and into 1945, a temporary committee was appointed to begin formalizing the organization of the Conservation District in Butler County. This committee came up with a list of 16 items they felt needed to be addressed to protect our soil and water resources; some of those items included erosion by wind and water, depletion of organic matter, flood control, farming up and down the hill, better crop rotation and pasture management, all of those are still relevant toady.

Butler County Soil Conservation District was established by a favorable vote of landowners and operators in 1945. The first Annual Meeting was held in 1946 which makes 2021 our 75th Annual Meeting!

In 1945, while local farmers and ranchers were meeting regularly to form the Butler County Conservation District, national and world events were also affecting people's lives and livelihoods:

- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage April 12, 1945. Vice President Harry S. Truman became president.
- Germany surrendered May 7; May 8 was declared V E (Victory over Europe) Day. On August 6 the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima; on August 8 they dropped the 2nd bomb on Nagasaki. This was the culmination of a large U.S. Army program that was part of the "Manhattan Project". Japan surrendered on August 14th and signed the official surrender on V J (Victory over Japan) Day September 2, 1945 ending World War II.
- Life expectancy was 65.9 years.
- First Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC), was built in 1945. It covered 1,800 square feet of floor space.
- A new house cost an average of $4,600.00; a new car cost an average of $1,020.00.
- Gasoline was $0.15 a gallon; stamps were $0.03 each.
- January 1945 wheat was $1.47/bushel; January 1945 heifers were bringing $9 to $10.
- You could buy 5 pounds of cornmeal for $0.23 at Halberg and Grove Food Market at 121 North Main in El Dorado. Hamburger was $0.25/pound.
- In 1945, only 5,000 homes had television sets.
- The Slinky toy was introduced at Gimbels Department Store in Philadelphia in 1945 and was immediately a hit selling all 400 units made in 90 minutes.

The whole premise of the soil conservation movement was to provide locally lead leadership on local issues and then provide technical and financial support through the USDA to get conservation work on the ground.

Butler County Conservation District Supervisors

Back Row—Richard Scott, Justin Grunder, Russell Janzen
Front Row— Linda Klaassen, Walter Burress

The first elected supervisors in 1945 were: CC Cunningham, Bert Noble, Merton King, Virgil Hammond and FE Dine. There have been 47 supervisors elected in our 75 year history, including the 5 who currently serve. Keep in mind that these men and women, considered public officials, give their time and talents without drawing a salary.

Thanks to all past and present conservation district supervisors for your time and talents and your service and commitment to protecting our soil and water resources.

"If conservation of natural resources goes wrong, nothing else will go right."

— M. S. Swaminathan

Rangeland Health

Douglas J. Spencer, NRCS State Grazing Specialist
Salina, Kansas

Winter is the season of colds and flu. When our general health is compromised, our body responds with a runny nose, scratchy throat, fever, or a variety of other symptoms. The doctor uses these symptoms to determine the true cause of our health concern. Have you ever wondered what symptoms our rangelands might show to indicate their health is being compromised? To better understand this question we must first define rangeland health.

Rangeland health is "*The degree to which the integrity of the soil, vegetation, water, and air, as well as the ecological processes of the rangeland ecosystem are balanced and sustained*." In order to evaluate such a complex system, the idea of rangeland health concentrates on three attributes or variables. The attributes include soil and site stability, hydrologic function, and biotic integrity.

By assessing health, the land manager can clearly identify how well the ecological processes (water cycle, energy flow, and nutrient cycle) are functioning.

Equipped with a shovel, some basic resource guides, and knowledge of plant species, a land manager can quickly determine the health of their rangeland resource. A key resource needed is an ecological site description (ESD) that helps inform the land manager about limitations of the soil, species of plants that could be present, potential plant communities that can occur on the site based on past management, and annual production. A single rangeland field could easily contain multiple ecological sites, each having unique characteristics. Ecological site descriptions are specific to major land resource area (MLRA) and can be located at **https://edit.jornada.nmsu.edu/catalogs/esd**.

The ESD also contains a reference sheet that identifies healthy values by site for seventeen specific indicators used to determine rangeland health. Assessing these individual indicators offer glimpses into the ecological processes occurring on the site. Just like the doctor has the check list showing items such as normal temperature and blood pressure, the reference sheet identifies those conditions that indicate proper function.

Indicators that need evaluated include rills, water flow patterns, pedestals and/or terracettes, bare ground, gullies, wind-scoured and/or depositional areas, litter movement, soil surface resistance to erosion, soil surface loss or degredation, effects of plant community on infiltration, compaction layer, functional/stuctural groups, dead or dying plants or plant parts, litter cover and depth, annual production, invasive plants, and vigor with an emphasis on reproductive capability of perennial plants.

By evaluating and rating the level of departure of these indicators compared to the reference sheet values, the land manager begins to reveal what ecological process is impaired, if any.

Like putting a puzzle together, the land manager can now piece together individual indicators to create a complete picture of soil and site stability, hydrologic function, and biotic integrity. What would the pieces reveal in your rangeland field(s)? If you'd like to find out, NRCS provides technical assistance with assessing the health of your rangeland resources.

For assistance, please contact the local NRCS office or conservation district office located at 2503 Enterprise, Suite B, El Dorado, Kansas. More information is also available on the Kansas web site at **www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov**. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas.

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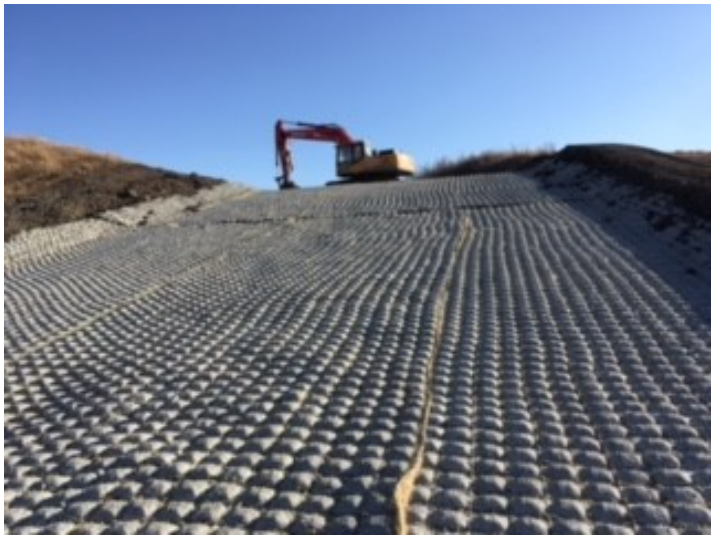

After flooding in 2019, this emergency spillway on a Little Walnut Hickory Watershed dam was repaired using a concrete mat. Funds were provided by the Watershed and through Emergency Watershed Protection Program funding available from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

KANSAS FARM NUMBERS

Kansas's number of farms and ranches declined during 2019, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. The number of farms and ranches in the State, at 58,500, was down 400 farms from 2018.

Numbers of farms and ranches in Kansas with less than $100,000 in agricultural sales decreased 300 farms from a year earlier while operations with more than $100,000 in agricultural sales decreased 100 farms. Land in farms and ranches in Kansas totaled 45.7 million acres, down 100,000 acres from 2018. The average size of operation, at 781 acres, was up 3 acres from a year earlier.

Find agricultural statistics for your county, State, and the Nation at www.nass.usda.gov.

"Cherish the natural world, because you're a part of it and you depend on it."
~ Sir David Attenborough

Geo—Textile Fabric

The Conservation District has geo-textile fabric for sale. The fabric comes in a 15 foot width and you can order as many feet as you need. It is $2.80 per square yard.

Marking Flags

If you need some flags we sell them for $7.50/100 count. They come in white, blue and pink.

Rent the District's No-Till Drills!

The Conservation District has three Great Plains Model 1006NT No-till Drills for rent. They are 13 feet wide with a 10 foot planting width. Two have 3 seed boxes and 1 has 2 seed boxes with capability to drill seed crops, brome, native grass and small seed such as wildflowers.

The drills have a single hitch and hydraulic lift. A 70 horsepower tractor or bigger is recommended for pulling in the field. You can pull it behind your truck when you pick it up. These drills rent for $9.50 an acre with a 10 acre minimum ($95 minimum charge).

Make reservations now to attend Butler County Conservation District's 75th Annual Meeting at 3 PM on Thursday, February 4, 2021 at The Benton Church, Benton, Kansas. RSVP required! Please call 316-320-3549. Please RSVP before January 29, 2021. **Note: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we will follow state and local guidelines and respect the guidelines set forth by The Benton Church.**

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Butler County Conservation District is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Conservation District Staff

L-R—Carey Fieser—NRCS Soil Conservation Technician
Justin Kneisel—NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist
Holly Edmundson—PBP Contract Clerk
Keith Murrow, Private Lands Conservationist
(Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever)
Sandy Koontz—Conservation District Manager
Jeff Parks—NRCS/Kansas Department of Agriculture/Division of Conservation Technician

Q: What do you call a well-balanced horse?
A: Stable.

The earth will continue to regenerate its life sources only as long as we and all the peoples of the world do our part to conserve its natural resources. It is a responsibility which every human being shares. Through voluntary action, each of us can join in building a productive land in harmony with nature.

~ Gerald R Ford

Root Plow

Don't push out those hedge rows! We have a root plow. There is a $25 charge to use the root plow.

Meet our new Pheasants Forever Biologist in El Dorado!

Brandi McCoy started working as a Pheasants Forever biologist in her home county, Nemaha in 2018. She's been in the El Dorado Field Office since November 2020.

Brandi graduated from Kansas State University in 2017 with degrees in Animal Science & Industry and Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. She's worked as a stream technician for Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) and forestry technician for Custom Forestry Applications. Her work has involved a variety of management practices including timber stand improvement, prescribed burning, native prairie plantings, streambank stabilization projects, rotational cell grazing, and noxious weed spraying.

Supported through a strategic partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Pheasants Forever Inc. & Quail Forever, Brandi will add much-needed capacity for private lands conservation assistance as part of the state's Farm Bill Biologist Partnership.

Commonly referred to as the "One Stop Shop" for anything conservation or wildlife-related on private lands, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Biologists possess the knowledge of federal, state, and local programs to assist landowners in finding the right program to meet their personal agriculture, wildlife, and land use goals.

Since 2010, the Farm Bill Biologist Partnership in Kansas has worked with 10,685 landowners to impact 415,923 acres throughout the state.

For more information about private lands conservation assistance in Butler County, contact Brandi at (785) 285-2356 or BMcCoy@PheasantsForever.Org or Brandi.McCoy@usda.gov.

In the summer of 2020, Diana Burress painted sunflowers on this silo just off of Thunder Road at SW 120th (east side).

Diana's husband Walter is a current supervisor and has served the District in that capacity for 15 years.

Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) Announces 2021 Bluestem Pasture Survey

The Kansas Department of Agriculture is seeking respondent feedback for the 2021 Bluestem Pasture Survey to collect information on native tallgrass pasture use and practices. The survey is administered through the K-State Land Use Survey Center and will be open through March 31, 2021.

The Bluestem Pasture Survey provides reliable, accurate information to Kansas ranchers and the agricultural community as a whole. The survey asks about native tallgrass pasture availability, leasing rates, and fencing rates, and should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

"The native tallgrass region of Kansas is a large, relatively intact grassland region including 14 counties which provides rich grazing opportunities for cattle producers. This biennial survey collects data that is used to provide a baseline comparison and can aid landowners and renters when entering into lease agreements," said Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam. "Underwriting this important survey tool is one way our agency works to provide useful data that supports the state's agriculture industry."

The 2021 Kansas Bluestem Pasture Survey is voluntary, anonymous and confidential. To complete the survey, please visit https://tinyurl.com/bluestem2021. To receive a written survey or to complete the survey over the phone, contact Dr. Leah Tsoodle, Director, Land Use Survey Center, at LTsoodle@ksu.edu or Kerry Wefald, KDA Division of Agriculture Marketing, at 785-564-6758

The Bluestem Pasture Survey is a collaborative effort between the Division of Agriculture Marketing at the Kansas Department of Agriculture and the K-State Land Use Survey Center within the Department of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University.

Native Prairie: The Key to Maximizing Profits & Improving Habitat

By: Brandi McCoy, Pheasants Forever Biologist

When you think of endangered ecosystems, maybe the Amazon Rainforest or the Great Barrier Reef comes to mind, but what if I told you one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world lies right here, in Kansas?

The Flint Hills of Kansas contains the largest continuous piece of tallgrass prairie left in the world. This prairie ecosystem once covered 170 million acres stretching from Saskatchewan, Canada to Texas, and from Kansas to the Mississippi. Today, less than 4% of the ecosystem remains, and only because of the shallow, rocky soil that couldn't be plowed. For a prairie that was taken for granted for so long, it's adaptability to this climate may be the key to maximizing livestock production while also improving wildlife habitat.

For thousands of years, the plants of this prairie ecosystem adapted to extreme environments of hot, dry summers and harsh, cold winters. Extreme drought known as megadroughts often plagued the tallgrass prairie, one of which began in the year 1317 and lasted for 110 years. This hostile environment gave these plants the choice to grow deep roots, or die and thus 60 species of grasses, 300 species of wildflowers and 100

species of lichens and woody species survived to call the tallgrass prairie their home.

These grasses that have long adapted to this hostile environment were featured in a recent report published by the USDA. A collection of research showed that these native grasses are more efficient than our non-native, cool season pastures such as fescue and brome.

When compared in a continuous 6 month grazing season, native grasses of switchgrass, big bluestem, eastern gamma and Indian grass produced higher average daily gains and more pounds per acre than that of the tall fescue pastures. For the switchgrass comparison that increase was a 66% higher average daily gain! Another study showed that Big Bluestem produced 48% higher average daily gains and a 30% higher total beef yield in pounds per acre. Our native pastures were able to do this without relying on fertilizer and with 2 times higher efficiency in water use of the fescue pastures.

This is also great news for wildlife habitat. For pheasants and quail, brome and fescue pastures aren't ideal habitat. These sod-forming grasses choke out native wildflowers that provide a food source of insects and seeds, they provide little to no cover, and they are too dense for young chicks to move through.

That isn't to say that cool season grasses don't have their place. Cool season grasses whether native or not, are crucial for extending our grazing season as these grasses peak in nutritive quality when warm season grasses are either dormant or low in protein. By including cool season pastures into our grazing system, we lengthen our grazing system and bridge annual forage production gaps giving us opportunities to practice year-round grazing.

Perhaps the way to think about it is balance. What types of pastures do you have, are they mostly introduced cool season pastures? Are you tired of the input costs of fertilizer? Are you interested in improving wildlife habitat and grazing? Then managing for or planting native warm season grasses might be for you. By utilizing both types of pastures we not only increase the diversity of our pastures and grazing systems, but we can maximize profits, improve wildlife habitat, and help preserve this endangered ecosystem by utilizing the plants that were destined to be here in the first place.

Fun Facts from the Kansas Farm Food Connection

Cotton bolls, which are the puffs of white produced by cotton plants, are technically fruit.

All the wheat grown in Kansas in a single year would fit in a train stretching from western Kansas to the Atlantic Ocean.

In pre-refrigeration days, hogs were harvested in the fall and cured for six to seven months, just in time for Easter dinner. That's how ham came to be the traditional Easter favorite.

One cowhide can produce enough leather to make 20 footballs, 18 soccer balls, 18 volleyballs or 12 basketballs.

The average Kansas dairy cow produces about 7 gallons of milk each day. That's more than 2,544 gallons of milk over the course of a typical year.

https://kansasfarmfoodconnection.org/

Celebrating 75 years!

Here are some items of interest from years past found in the Conservation District files.

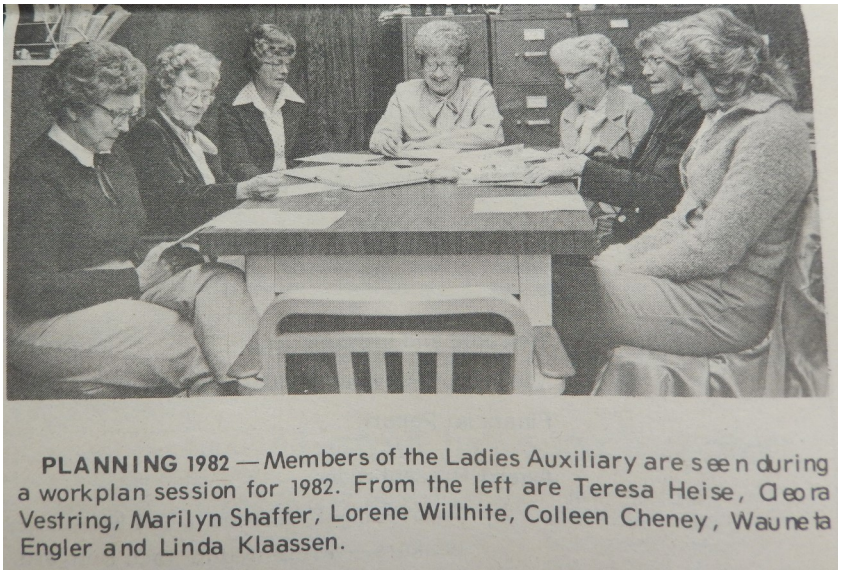
A H Klaassen with his nephew Rainey in a field of oats and sweet clover planted in alternate rows. May 13, 1948

The caption on this photo from the 1960's read, The "Big 5" Native Grasses held by a "Little 4". This young boy was not identified on the back of the picture, so if you know who he is, let us know!

Old Conservation Clip Art

"Erosion in nothing to crow about"

Linda Klaassen, a current supervisor, was part of the Ladies Auxiliary back in 1981. The Ladies Auxiliary, formed in 1963 (Butler County was the first to organize an auxiliary in the State), was usually made up of Supervisors' wives. This organization is no longer used to promote conservation/ education activities, most likely due to changing demographics and additional staff hired to carry out programs. >



PLANNING 1982 — Members of the Ladies Auxiliary are seen during a workplan session for 1982. From the left are Teresa Heise, Cleora Vestring, Marilyn Shaffer, Lorene Willhite, Colleen Cheney, Wauneta Engler and Linda Klaassen.

- John Claassen – 26 Years
- John Templeton and Walter Woods – 20 Years
- Oliver Sontag, Blaine Bodecker, Vincent Vestring & Bruce Bodecker – 18 Years
- Ellsworth Willhite – 17 Years
- CC Cunningham, Homer Milbourn, Merton King, Walter Burress – 15 Years
- Richard Scott – 12 Years
- E E Jabes, Daryl Regier – 11 Years
- Lloyd Howard – 10 Years
- Ted Klaassen, A H Gish – 9 Years

Supervisors in office the longest:

Listed are the Supervisors who served in office the longest (current Supervisors Walter Burress and Richard Scott have made this list)

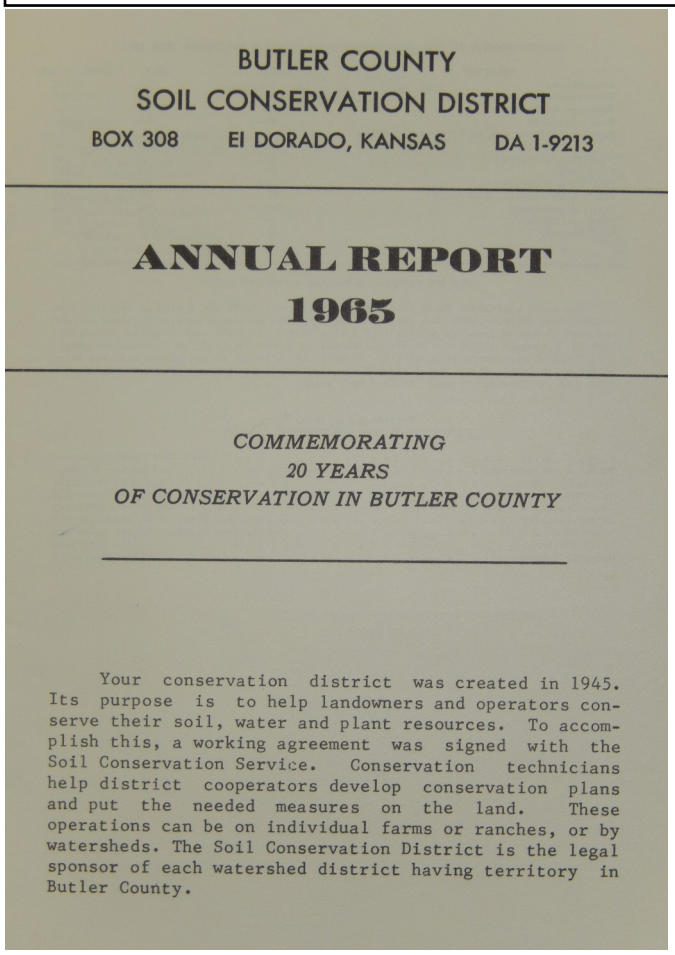
In 1950, Eugene Payer, Butler County Extension Agent, first announced the annual Banker's awards sponsored by the Kansas Banker's Association. He urged the District to nominate worthy farmers in Butler County.

At the 1953 Annual Meeting, the first Kansas Bankers Association Awards were given out by W F Easter of Towanda Bank. Awards went to James and John Boyer, D A Edmiston, Harold Brown and Ira Houser.

KANSAS BANKERS ASSOCIATION AWARD SOIL CONSERVATION

Since 1953, 178 cooperators have received the Bankers Award for Soil Conservation, 13 cooperators received Grassland awards, 8 cooperators received awards for Wildlife Habitat, 5 received awards for Water Quality, 1 award was for a Windbreak and 1 award was for Stewardship.

Each year, a nominating committee made up of County Extension, County Commission, Farm Service Agency, NRCS and conservation district representatives and the Butler County Key Banker choose one or more landowners to receive the Kansas Banker's Award.



BUTLER COUNTY
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOX 308 EI DORADO, KANSAS DA 1-9213

ANNUAL REPORT
1965

COMMEMORATING
20 YEARS
OF CONSERVATION IN BUTLER COUNTY

Your conservation district was created in 1945. Its purpose is to help landowners and operators conserve their soil, water and plant resources. To accomplish this, a working agreement was signed with the Soil Conservation Service. Conservation technicians help district cooperators develop conservation plans and put the needed measures on the land. These operations can be on individual farms or ranches, or by watersheds. The Soil Conservation District is the legal sponsor of each watershed district having territory in Butler County.

11-23-73

EDITORIAL

We, too, are grateful

The Times received the following letter on a recent day:

"The supervisors of the Butler County Conservation District and the directors of the Butler County Watershed District wish to express our appreciation to you for the news coverage you have given us.

"We are most grateful to you and your staff for the fine cooperation we always receive and would like to take this means of thanking you.

"If we can ever be of any assistance to you and your "Times Family" please feel free to call.

"E. E. Jabes, Chairman

"Homer A. Milbourn, Vice-chairman

"Walter Woods, Secretary

"John H. Claassen, Treasurer

"Blaine Bodecker, Member"

The Times was pleased to receive this friendly missive, and must say in return that this newspaper is grateful for the work of the Butler County Conservation district in past years. It also highly approves, and appreciates, the immense forward strides the Butler County Watershed District has taken in immediate past years. This newspaper believes that Butler County will profit immensely in the future by reason of the numerous watersheds which will cover Butler County like a blanket when the program is entirely finished.

Future generations in Butler County at large will be immensely helped by the conservation program which has been carried forward in this county in recent years. The men who signed this letter to The Times should be enduringly honored in future years for the magnificent achievements they have wrought today.

In July, 1960, Kansas Gas and Electric (KG&E, formally Westar, now Evergy) gave a report to the Conservation District on the promotional program the company had for conservation work. KG&E would have an award dinner for all cooperators who had completed conservation plans on their land. The Conservation District approved their offer to promote conservation work and cooperate with the company on their efforts. In 1979 it was reported that 333 cooperators had earned this award. These signs, although now hard to read, can still be seen across Butler County.

Educational Events/Activities Sponsored by the Conservation District

Conservation District 4-H Conservation Banner

This banner, created by the Rose Hill Rustlers 4-H Club, received Grand Champion at the 2020 Butler County 4-H Fair. The Conservation District Sponsors the Conservation Banner Division at the Fair.

Conservation District 4-H Photo Contest and State Photo Contest 2nd Place Winner!!

Rylan Nichols received 1st place in the 2020 Conservation Photo Contest at the Butler County 4-H Fair. Her photo was entered into the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts Photo Contest and received 2nd place in the State!!

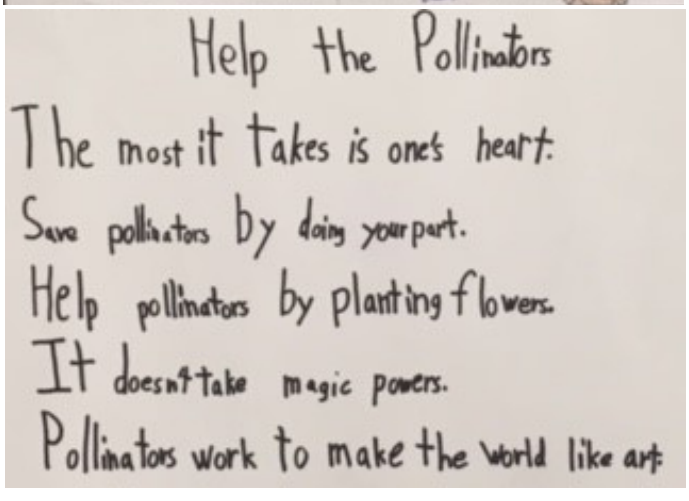
Children make your life important.
~ Erma Bombeck

Children must be taught how to think,
not what to think.
~ Margaret Mead

2020 Poster and Limerick Contest

The poster below was created by London Bridwell, a third grader from Ewalt Elementary in Augusta. The poster in the middle was created by Cali Young, a fourth grader from Bluestem Elementary in Leon. The limerick at the bottom was created by Domenico Cooper, a fourth grader at Berean Academy in Elbing. These were all first place winners in our poster/limerick contest in 2020 and were submitted to the state contest sponsored by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

Domenico's limerick received honorable mention at the state contest!



Poster and Limerick Contest Winners

The 2020 Conservation Poster and Limerick Contest theme was "Where Would we BEE Without Pollinators?". Eight schools and 14 teachers participated this year. We received 212 entries; 205 posters and 7 limericks.

2020 POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

Andover—Robert Martin Elementary—Fifth Grade
1st Place — Lydia Powell
2nd — Hudson Schmidt
3rd — Sadie Ormiston

Augusta—Ewalt Elementary—Third Grade
1st Place — London Bridwell
2nd Place — Sophia Ewing
3rd Place — Lexin Harrod

London's poster was submitted to the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts State Contest

Augusta—Ewalt Elementary—Fourth Grade
1st Place — Amelia Schreiber
2nd Place — Riley Humbarger
3rd Place — Devin Zweifel

Augusta—Garfield Elementary—Fourth Grade
1st Place — Audrey Wells
2nd Place — Lilyanne Keyser
3rd Place — Chloe Randol

Circle—Oil Hill—El Dorado—Third Grade
1st Place — Logan Patty
2nd Place — Claire Fountain
3rd Place — Hess Hansen

Elbing—Berean Academy—Fourth Grade
1st Place — Domenico Cooper
2nd Place — Kai Leinbach
3rd Place — Gabriel Dennett

Leon Bluestem—Fourth Grade
1st Place — Cali Young
2nd Place — Jayla Wakefield
3rd Place — Ella Gibb

Cali's poster was submitted to the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts State Contest

Rose Hill Intermediate—Fourth Grade
1st Place — Nicole Davila
2nd Place — Ashlynn Whitson
3rd Place (tie) — Mackenzie O'Bar
3rd Place (tie) — Avery Forgie

2020 LIMERICK WINNERS

Elbing—Berean Academy—Fourth Grade
1st Place — Domenico Cooper
2nd Place — Haylie Regier
3rd Place — Cody Entz

Domenico's limerick was submitted to the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts State Contest and received honorable mention.

TEACHER AWARDS

Each teacher received $100 for participating in our contest:

3rd Grade

Augusta—Ewalt Elementary
Brenda McCoskey

Circle Oil Hill
Sara Martin & Taylor Hall

4th Grade

Berean Academy—Elbing
Nita Newby
Augusta –Ewalt Elementary
Leslie Lewellen & Kade Kinnamon
Augusta—Garfield Elementary
Jennifer Cody & Jennifer Husselman
Leon Bluestem
Angie Greene & Jaz Burdette
Rose Hill Intermediate
Tammie Classen

5th Grade

Andover—Robert Martin Elementary
Shanie Rucker, Cristie Karber & Kelsi Barlow

Thank you for teaching environmental education in your classrooms!

Congratulations to All!

Our 2021 Stewardship Theme is, "Healthy Forests—Healthy Communities"

Butler County Conservation District
2503 Enterprise, Suite B
El Dorado, Kansas 67042
316-320-3549

Conservation District's 75th Annual Meeting to be held Thursday, February 4, 2021 at The Benton Church in Benton

The 75th Annual Meeting of Butler County Conservation District is scheduled for Thursday, February 4, 2021 at The Benton Church in Benton. The meeting will start at 3:00 PM.

RSVP REQUIRED DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS! For reservations, please call the Conservation District at 316-320-3549 or email sandy.koontz@ks.nacdnet.net. Registration deadline is January 29, 2021.

Check out Butler County Conservation District's Website:
www.butlercountyconservationdistrictks.com

2020 Key Banker Award for Soil Conservation

Prairie Meadows Farm

****

2020 Grassland Award

Haywire Cattle Company

conserving natural resources *for our future*

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA FSA
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • FARM SERVICE AGENCY

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