

Butler County Conservation District

79th Annual Edition



Water Festivals Teach Children the Importance of Conserving and Protecting our Natural Resources

In October 2024, the 10th Wonders of Water (WOW!) Water Festival was held for Andover 5th graders at Robert Martin Elementary School. The first festival in Andover was held in 2013 and has been held every year except 2020 and 2021 during COVID. The Walnut River Water Festival, held at Butler Community College, began in 1998 and ran till 2019, 21 years. Unfortunately, due to COVID and retirements at Butler Community College, this festival has not been able to re-organize.



Andrew Hansen, NRCS Soil Conservationist from Cowley County demonstrating the Stream Trailer at Andover WOW!

It is estimated since 1998, these two festivals have taught 14,800 students the importance of conserving and protecting our natural resources.

Over the years, presenters have educated students on soils, water and water quality, groundwater, the impacts of erosion on soil and water resources, wildlife and wildlife habitat, stream health, watersheds, trees, recycling, pollinators, weather, electricity and the water cycle. Some unique sessions over the years included painting with soil, edible soil profile, pumpkin exploration and edible aquifer.

It takes a lot of presenters to run a festival. Presenters this year included NRCS staff from Butler, Cowley and Elk Counties, Conservation District staff from Butler,

Cowley and Sedgwick Counties and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks staff. Butler County Farm Bureau and Pheasants Forever also provided presenters.

In addition to agencies assisting, Roger Grier, science teacher at Rose Hill High School and advisor of the Rose Hill Rocket Green School Club, provided presenters for four of the stations. The Rose Hill Green School Club has assisted the last 3 years with the Andover Festival.

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A pollinator presentation for Andover WOW with Kylee Barlett of the Rose Hill Rockets Green School Club



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation District Staff

NRCS Staff:

Justin Edwards—District Conservationist
Micajah (Cage) Goins—Soil Conservation Technician
Kathryn Gonzalez—Soil Conservationist
Spencer Heise—Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist
Holly Edmondson—NRCS/PBP Contract Clerk

Conservation District Staff:

Deanna Jackson—Conservation District Manager
Sandy Koontz—Watershed District/Program Manager

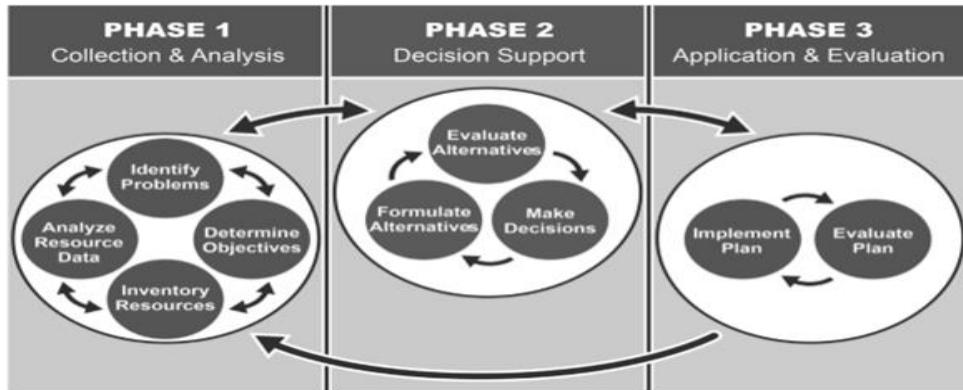
*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.
Butler County Conservation District is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Planning First

Justin Edwards—District Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Farmers and ranchers have a lot of different things to think about when trying to run a successful business. Some considerations could be crop prices, input costs, price of cattle, drought, etc. Decisions are made to what the farmer/rancher thinks is the best for their operation and what is best for the land. Did you know the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help farmers and ranchers through some of these considerations with good conservation planning?

The NRCS uses a 9-Step Conservation planning process to help producers identify resource concerns on their land develop options (alternatives) to address these resource concerns. Common resource concerns in Butler County are woody encroachment, soil loss/erosion, and water quality degradation. The staff in the NRCS office are trained to come out to the field, identify resource concerns and work with the producers to develop a conservation plan. Often a producer already has an idea of what some of their resource concerns might be but a field visit from the NRCS office may help identify other potential resource concerns not noticed by the producer. The NRCS office may also have ideas on how to address the resource concerns that the producer hadn't thought of yet. After the site visits and conversations have taken place with the producer the conservation plan is developed. The producer can either accept or decline the conservation plan. If the producer chooses to adopt the conservation plan, we can start looking into financial assistance options.



The NRCS was founded on Conservation Planning. We are eager to meet you in the field, evaluate your resource concerns, provide you with options and alternatives and develop a conservation plan that you can use to apply for funds to implement your conservation work.

Feel free to call our office at 316-321-5803 Ext 3 if you would like to set up an appointment.

Kansas Range Youth Camp Scholarships Available!

Attention upcoming high school sophomores, juniors and seniors with an interest in rangeland management, plants, livestock, or wildlife.

Each year the Conservation District offers scholarships to attend the week long Range Youth Camp sponsored by the Kansas Section Society for Range Management.

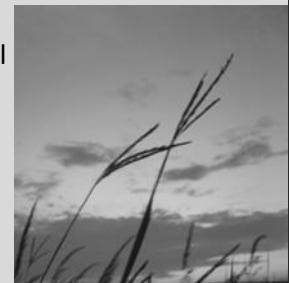
During this week long camp, students will learn to identify rangeland plants, determine plant growth and stocking rates, discuss livestock nutrition, rangeland wildlife management and much more!

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

2025 Kansas Range Youth Camp will be June 10-13, 2025 at White Memorial Camp in Council Grove, Kansas.

Kansas Range Youth Camp has been educating Kansas youth for over 50 years.

The Conservation District offers full scholarships to students who attend from Butler County.



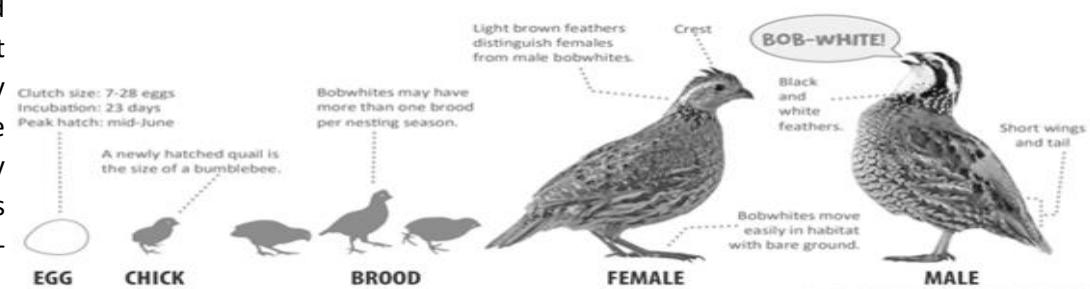


What Makes Good Quail Habitat?

Spencer Heise - Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

There are several factors that can affect quail populations in an area. Factors such as weather, predation, and lack of food all play an important role in establishing a quail population. Even more important than the factors previously stated is habitat! Without high quality habitat and a sizeable quantity of habitat, quail cannot survive. The foundation of an established population of quail is habitat.

The amount of habitat and the type of cover in that particular habitat are very important. Ideally, quail like varying heights and density of native grasses and forbs with woody structure nearby, such as shrub thickets.



Quail will use different types of cover based on the time of year. For example, quail will use less dense and more open areas during the brooding season in the spring. They'll move to an area with more dense vegetation during the colder months.

The habitat must also provide food sources for the quail as well. A quail's diet mainly consists of insects and seeds. The time of year also plays a role in what their diets will consist of. During the warmer months they will seek out insects, berries, and native plant seeds (primarily forb seeds such as ragweed, pigweed, croton, sunflower, etc.). In the colder months they will rely on crop seeds such as corn, milo, and wheat.

The importance of habitat availability can not be stressed enough. It is the foundation for establishing a population of quail, as well as other wildlife species. Quail like a habitat with diverse plant community, access to food, shelter from predators, and the ability to successfully raise their brood. If you have any questions about how you can create quail habitat you can stop by the USDA-NRCS office, email me sheise@pheasantsforever.org or give me a call at 620-953-294.

Ag-Related Stress

Kansas farmers, ranchers and their families are the backbone of our State, providing us with high-quality crops, livestock and dairy products. Unfortunately, the stress that comes with these responsibilities can be overwhelming. Unpredictable weather, heavy workloads and financial worries can sometimes take their toll on farm families and lead to mental & emotional distress, substance abuse, anxiety, depression and even suicide. Caring for your own health and wellness in this high-stress profession is often overlooked but is just as critical as caring for your farm business.

If you are a farmer or know of someone in crisis or in need of assistance please contact Regional Concern Hotline free 24/7 @ 1-800-447-1985 or visit www.kansasagstress.org.

Excerpt from Kansas Department of Agriculture; Kansas Ag Stress Resources

Butler County Conservation District—79th Annual Meeting

Make reservations to attend Butler County Conservation District's 79th Annual Meeting at 6 PM on Thursday, February 6, 2025 at the Welcome Center on the Butler Community College (Clifford/Stone Room) El Dorado Campus. RSVP required! Please call 316-320-3549.

RSVP

High Tunnel Initiative

A High Tunnel System, commonly called a “hoop house,” is an increasingly popular conservation practice for farmers, and is available with financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

With high tunnel systems, no summer is too short or winter too cold because high tunnels extend the growing season, improve plant quality and soil quality, reduce nutrient and pesticide transportation, improve air quality through reduced transportation inputs and reduce energy use by providing consumers with a local source of fresh produce.

High tunnels protect plants from severe weather and allow farmers to extend their growing seasons – growing earlier into the spring, later into the fall, and sometimes, year-round. And because high tunnels prevent direct rainfall from reaching plants, farmers can use precise tools like drip irrigation to efficiently deliver water and nutrients to plants. High tunnels also offer farmers a greater ability to control pests and can even protect plants from pollen and pesticide drift.

A number of soil health practices can be used in high tunnels, including cover crops and crop rotations, which also prevent erosion, suppress weeds, increase soil water content, and break pest cycles.

Perhaps the best thing about high tunnels is that they help farmers provide their communities with healthy local food for much of the year – food that requires less energy and transportation inputs.

Supporting Practices

Supporting practices may be needed to ensure that resource concerns associated with implementing and managing high tunnel systems are addressed. These conservation practices may include:

- Critical Area Planting
- Diversion Grassed Waterway
- Mulching
- Irrigation System, Micro-irrigation
- Subsurface Drain
- Surface Drainage, Field Ditch
- Underground Outlet



Ready to make a high tunnel system part of your operation? Check out Apply for EQIP.

Excerpt from USDA—NRCS www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-high-tunnel-initiative

Local Work Group Meeting Scheduled for February 27, 2025 at Augusta Public Library—1 PM to 3 PM

A Local Work Group (LWG) meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 27, 2025 at the Augusta Public Library, 1609 State Street, starting at 1:00 PM; the meeting will last approximately 2 hours.

The purpose of this meeting is to make recommendations to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist related to addressing natural resource concerns at local level.

“LWGs are important because they provide recommendations on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conservation activities and programs. It is critical that the ‘boots on the ground’ have a voice in the process,” said Dan Meyerhoff, Executive Director for the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

Our LWG meeting will also have a virtual component to allow you to participate remotely if you wish. Contact the Conservation District at 316-320-3549 for more information.

Butler County Conservation District Supervisors

Back Row L-R — Richard Scott-Treasurer; Russell Janzen-Chairman; Justin Grunder-Vice Chair
 Front Row L-R — Penny McNett-Secretary; Nathan Miller- Member



U.S DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE Farm Service Agency HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND CONSERVATION (HELC) AND WETLAND CONSERVATION (WC) CERTIFICATION

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



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. They have 2 seed boxes with the 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 \$10.50 an acre. Anything 10 acres or less will be charged a flat rate of \$125.00.

Root Plow

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



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.



DID YOU KNOW?

When you use the Conservation District's No Till Drills, Root Plow, or purchase geotextile or flags, that you help support our education & information programs?

Thank you!

Educational Events/Activities Sponsored by the Conservation District

4-H Conservation Banner Sponsored by the Conservation District

This banner, created by the Towanda Rustlers 4-H Club, received Grand Champion at the 2024 Butler County 4-H Fair. The Conservation District Sponsors the Conservation Banner Division at the Fair.



Conservation District 4-H Photo Contest

The Conservation District sponsors the Conservation Photo at the Butler County 4-H Fair. Kylee Nichols of Benton Busy Bees received 1st place in the 2024 Conservation Photo Division. Kylee's photo was submitted in the State Photo Contest sponsored by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts. Kylee's photo received Honorable Mention at the State Photo Contest.



2024 Poster Contest

The theme for the 2024 Poster Contest was "May the Forest be with You Always"

These posters were first place winners in their division in Butler County's contest and were submitted to the State Poster Contest sponsored by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

The poster on top was created by Katharine Andrews, a fourth grader from Grandview Elementary in El Dorado.

The bottom poster was created by Lauren Schilling, a third grader from Bluestem Elementary in Leon.



**MARCH 2025 IS
KANSAS
AGRICULTURE
MONTH!**





2024 POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

The 2024 Conservation Poster Contest theme was "May the Forest be with You Always". Seven schools and 19 teachers participated this year. We received 339 posters and paid out \$680.00 in prize money to students and \$1,900.00 in teacher incentives.

Andover—Cottonwood Elementary—Fifth Grade

- 1st Place — Roderick Pipes
- 2nd Place — Vivienne Janssen

Andover—Robert Martin Elementary—Fifth Grade

- 1st Place — Blake Tresner
- 2nd Place — Maddyx Combs
- 3rd Place — Eiva Draudvila

Honorable Mentions—Zara Ansari; Taylor Roop; Lily Brough and Logan Waller

Augusta—Garfield Elementary—Fourth Grade

- 1st Place — Isabella Willams
- 2nd Place — Avery Brake
- 3rd Place — Alyceia Bascombe

Honorable Mention—Jack Bourget and Sophie Branson

Circle—Oil Hill—El Dorado—Third Grade

- 1st Place — Ian Humig
- 2nd Place — Dean Funk
- 3rd Place — Kayleigh Carpenter
- Honorable Mention—Marley Parker and Kennedy Waddell

El Dorado—Grandview Elementary—Fourth Grade

- 1st Place — Katharine Andrews
- 2nd Place — Marissa Cooper
- 3rd Place — Ava Thomas and Colin Tetrick
- Honorable Mention—Katie Lechtenberg

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

Leon—Bluestem Elementary—Third Grade

- 1st Place — Lauren Schilling
- 2nd Place — Daniel Trujillo
- 3rd Place — Alexa Patterson

Honorable Mention — Amelia Campa-Garcia

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

Rose Hill Intermediate—Fourth Grade

- 1st Place — Canton Hackney
- 2nd Place — Colleen Starnes
- 3rd Place — Peyton Simon

Honorable Mentions—Tyson Spies and Ari Breault

TEACHER AWARDS

Each teacher received a \$100 incentive for participating in our contest:

Andover—Cottonwood Elementary

Ellen Shwartzbeck

Andover—Robert Martin Elementary

Shanie Rucker, Cristie Karber
Kaegen O'Donell. and Kelsi Barlow

Augusta—Garfield Elementary

Jennifer Cody and Jennifer Hesselman

Circle Oil Hill

Kelsey Wuthrich and Taylor Hall

El Dorado—Grandview Elementary

Jim Shum and Linda Barker

Leon Bluestem Elementary

Ashtyn Jurging and Jenae Woodard

Rose Hill Intermediate

Tammie Classen, Nicole McCall,
Robyn Darbyshire, John Meyers,
Samantha Cheek and Kathryn Renfro



*Thank you for teaching
environmental
education in your classrooms!*

Congratulations to All!

**Our 2025 Poster, 4-H and
Stewardship Theme is,
“Home is Where the Habitat Is”**



A habitat provides the essentials (food, water, shelter, space) that plants and animals need to survive. Protecting habitats helps maintain healthy ecosystems.

Kansas Bankers Award Program

The Kansas Bankers Association and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks partner with K-State Research and Extension, the local Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and other agriculture related organizations to sponsor an award recognizing farmers, ranchers, and landowners who have completed projects designed to improve environmental quality or conserve natural resources. The purpose of the Kansas Bankers Award Program is to stimulate a greater interest in the conservation of the agricultural and natural resources of Kansas by giving recognition to those farmers and landowners who have made outstanding progress in practicing conservation on their farms.

Representatives from these agencies are on the local committee that chooses an individual from nominations provided to receive an award in one of six categories which are explained below.

Soil Conservation Award

The most popular and recognized award is the Soil Conservation Award. The Soil Conservation Award seeks to promote the conservation of natural resources in Kansas. This award recognizes farmers and ranchers who have developed and implemented complete soil conservation plans according to the capability of the land.

The basis of selection of individual awardees is determined by use of land according to its capabilities, completeness of the conservation plan, balance of the farm enterprise, quality of conservation work completed and maintenance of practices. In addition to traditional practices, special practices such as grassland development, forestry, pollution abatement, riparian management, water quality, and residue management are also considered.

Wildlife Award

The Wildlife Award seeks to promote the interest in fish and wildlife habitat in Kansas. The purpose of this program is to stimulate a greater interest in fish and wildlife habitat management in Kansas by giving recognition to landowners who have made outstanding progress in the development and stewardship of fish and wildlife resources.

Selection of the wildlife award is made based on overall habitat quality, quantity, maintenance, and enhancements on the entire farm. Some parameters that are looked at include: grazing and haying practices, field borders, food plots, tillage practices, waterways, terraces, crop rotation, native grass, winter cover, nesting cover, brood rearing cover, fenced out areas, and farm pond enhancement. Selection is based on the farm's overall impact on wildlife populations. Habitat can be more intensively managed on smaller acreage, yet total resource conservation on larger farms may impact a larger variety and population of wildlife.

Water Quality Award

The Water Quality Recognition Program seeks to encourage the protection of the natural water resources in Kansas. The purpose of this program is to stimulate a greater interest in the protection of the water resource of Kansas by giving recognition to those farmers and ranchers who have taken measures to improve and protect water quality on their farms and ranches.

The basis of selection of individual awardees is determined using the following points: Quality of water quality improvement and protection work. adoption of cropping, grazing, and animal feeding operation practices to reduce sediment, nutrient, and bacterial contamination of surface waters. Practices can include conversion of cropland to total no-till farming systems (high residue levels), planting grass or forested riparian buffers, development of a nutrient management plan, installing livestock waste management systems, rotational grazing, improved livestock watering distribution systems, moving livestock operations out of riparian areas, creation of stabilized stream crossings, and mortality management.

Water Conservation Award

The Water Conservation Award seeks to promote the conservation of water resources in Kansas. The purpose of this program is to stimulate a greater interest in the conservation of the Kansas water resource by giving recognition to those farmers and ranchers who have taken measures to improve the beneficial use of an existing water supply and/or reduce water consumption on their farms or ranches.



The basis of selection of individual awardees is determined using the following points: Adoption of improved irrigation management techniques, such as irrigation scheduling, system improvement, and remote monitoring and/or control, adoption of cropping systems to match irrigation system capacities, adoption of appropriate tillage systems to reduce soil water evaporation and improve soil water storage from precipitation, evidence of field tests for the evaluation of irrigation system performance, submission of crop water budgets that track soil water levels, irrigation applications and rainfall events and yield performance and improvement and/or development of on-farm or ranch water supplies.

Energy Conservation Award

The purpose of this program is to stimulate a greater interest in the conservation of energy by giving recognition to those Kansas farmers and ranchers who have taken measures to reduce fossil-fuel based energy consumption on their farms and ranches.

The basis of selection of individual awardees is determined using the following points: Efficient use of energy in farmstead buildings, equipment, and operations including but not limited to building insulation; heating and cooling such as ground source heat pumps; lighting; and striving for peak fuel efficiency in high energy consumption components such as irrigation pumping, refrigeration, power units for tillage, harvesting equipment, etc., production of energy from renewable sources including but not limited to solar; wind; biomass; biofuels such as biodiesel, methane, ethanol, etc., utilization of renewable energy sources including those mentioned in b. above as well as other similar sources, cogeneration of energy such as internal combustion engine powered generator with beneficial use of waste engine heat, co-utilization of energy through combining processes such as heat one stream while cooling another by using heat exchanger; cool milk while heating water for cleaning by using a heat pump; etc.

Windbreak Award

The purpose of this program is to stimulate a greater interest in windbreaks in Kansas by giving recognition to land-owners who have made outstanding progress in the establishment and management of windbreaks.

The basis of selection of individual awardees is determined on the following points: The primary purpose of the windbreak(s) will be to provide protection from damaging winds for residential (or other structures) areas, livestock, or fields, the original windbreak must consist of planted trees or shrubs, the plants must be managed and in healthy condition with no significant gaps in the windbreaks, windbreak location, density, and length must be adequate to provide the desired protection, windbreaks should be a minimum of three years old.

Nominations can be made by any person in the county. Contact Butler County Conservation District for more information on the program and/or to nominate a deserving farmer/rancher. Visit the K-State Research and Extension website for more information: <http://www.agronomy.ksstate.edu/extension>.

Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD)/Sharp Brothers Seed Company Grassland Award

Another award program that recognizes the conservation efforts of our ranchers in Butler County is the Grassland Award sponsored by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts and Sharp Brothers Seed Company. A committee, made up of the local conservation district, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, K-State Research and Extension and other agricultural organizations, selects a deserving rancher for this award based on grazing management practices and other conservation efforts as it relates to ranchland management.

If you know of a deserving rancher for this award, contact the Conservation District at 316-320-3549.

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

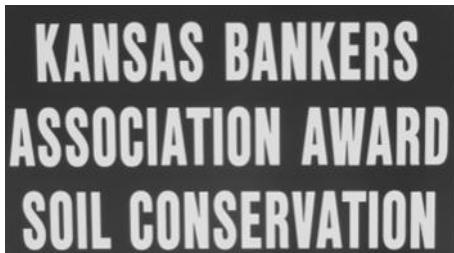
Next time you visit your bank—thank them for supporting agriculture in Butler County.

~ American Ag Credit ~ Citizens Bank of Kansas ~ Commerce Bank ~

~ Community National Bank ~ Emprise Bank ~ Equity Bank ~

~ Intrust Bank ~ RCB Bank ~ Vintage Bank Kansas ~

~ White Eagle Credit Union ~



Boost Pasture Health with Late-Season Prescribed Burns

K-State's KC Olson's research shows the benefits of moving prescribed fire from spring to late summer/early fall.

As a result of recent KSU research, interest in non-conventional approaches to prescribed fire has surged in Kansas. Several studies, each researching unique aspects of prescribed fire for noxious weed control in native and cultivated pastures, have recommended moving prescribed fire season from the spring to the late-summer or very early fall as a natural means of weed control.

Here are some quick facts:

- Prescribed fire conducted between August 1 and September 15 delivers strong, comprehensive control of late-maturing noxious weeds like sericea lespedeza, Caucasian bluestem, and yellow bluestem
- Native and cultivated warm-season grasses and their root carbohydrate stores are unaffected by these late-season fires, nor are cool-season grasses stimulated by them
- Beneficial forbs, like legumes and nectar-producing wildflowers, may increase up to 3-fold
- Woody-stemmed plants are killed more easily because of greater ambient temperatures

Here's the approach that was suggested:

- Defer spring fire in any year you wish to evaluate prescribed burning in August or September
- Litter (dead plant material laying on the soil surface) should be fairly thick (30 to 40% of the soil surface covered), because this is what carries the flame
- Expect to use more ignition fuel than is typical for spring prescribed burns. All other rules of safety for spring fires still apply
- Expect to repeat the treatment several times for a visually pleasing effect on noxious weeds and plant species diversity

What to expect:

- Significant plant material will remain after a late burn. This is normal. What remains will generally top-kill within 48 hours and begin to regrow
- Expect dense smoke because the fire will cause a great deal of water from plant material to evaporate
- Keep helpers hydrated. Conditions can be uncomfortably hot
- Those producers that operation short-season stocker cattle operations will be able to treat pastures soon after cattle ship. Stocker cattle weight gains may be slightly reduced (< 10 pounds) by August, compared to April prescribed fire treatment
- Cow-calf and season-long stocker operators may wish to treat one-half to one-third of their acres with late-season fire on a rotating basis so that fall and winter forage is available afterward
- Treatments can be applied on an annual or biennial basis for effective weed control. Thereafter, periodic maintenance treatments at 3 to 4 year intervals will be necessary to keep invading vegetation at bay

If you are interested in reducing herbicide usage, saving money, saving time, and improving the health of range and pasture, an August or September burn treatment may be for you. Contact the Department of Animal Sciences and Industry at Kansas State University for more information (785-532-1259).

About The Author: KC Olson, a leading expert in range beef cattle nutrition and management at Kansas State University, is renowned for his contributions to the agricultural world. As the W.M. and F.A. Lewis Distinguished Chair, KC's research focuses on enhancing the profitability and sustainability of the beef industry, particularly through managing invasive plants, nutritional strategies, and fire ecology. His recent study on prescribed fire practices highlights the benefits of shifting from spring to late summer or early fall burns, offering an effective strategy for controlling noxious weeds while boosting beneficial wildflower populations and preserving native grasses. This innovative approach helps reduce herbicide use and improves pasture health, making a significant impact on sustainable agriculture.

Excerpt from Kansas Grazing Land Coalition (www.KGLC.org)

**We can complain because rose bushes have thorns,
or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.**

~ Abraham Lincoln





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 Kansas Department of Agriculture/Division of Conservation. 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, 2024 to be considered for our next round of funding that we receive in July 2024. 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. A conservation plan is required as well; NRCS will work with you to develop your plan.

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. With your help, we can 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 the Conservation District office, 316-320-3549.



Solar Well & Watering Facilities



Terraces



Waterways



Native Grass / Wildlife Projects

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



Rick McNary Guest Speaker at Conservation District's 79th Annual Meeting Thursday, February 6, 2025—6:00 PM

Rick McNary is a writer, speaker, and a consultant for communities starting local food systems. He has been involved in international hunger relief for more than twenty years after a starving girl in Nicaragua asked him to feed her.

Rick founded Shop Kansas Farms (SKF) in the early stages of the pandemic in 2020 to connect consumers to producers who sold food from their farm. In the early stages of the Facebook group, more than 10,000 members joined each day as consumers began to purchase food from local farms and ranches. It has now grown to more than 168,000 members. Since then, a website was built which attracts more than 10,000 consumers from all over the U.S. and destination marketing events known as the Market of Farms has been created. In addition, it has given Rick the opportunity to work on a local food system model known as Harvest Hubs. He sold SKF to Kansas Farm Bureau in 2022 which, in turn, kept him on as a consultant for the Harvest Hub model which creates positive impact in especially rural communities.

Throughout his professional career, Rick has excelled in community leadership, teaching others the power of effective teamwork and volunteerism. He is a frequent speaker on the topic of world hunger, local food systems as keys to rural prosperity and as a motivational speaker. He's the author of three books and writes for Kansas Farm Bureau's *Kansas Living* magazine, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, along with other national fly-fishing publications. His new book, "Harvesting Hope: A glimpse of farmers and ranchers through my eyes," will be available to purchase in the fall of 2024.

Admittedly not a farmer because he lacks the courage, faith and intelligence, his desire is to be known as the farmer's biggest cheerleader. Rick considers his greatest professional accomplishments being awarded the Kansas Farm Bureau Friend of Agriculture award as well as the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Hero Award, both in 2020.

He lives in Kansas with his wife, Christine. They have five children and nine grandchildren.

