

Conservation Conversation

NRCS Announces Deadline for EQIP Funding in Kansas

Salina, Kansas, October 17, 2014—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Eric B. Banks, announced an application evaluation cutoff date of November 21, 2014, for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and provide opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related resources on agricultural land, such as cropland, rangeland, non-industrial private forestland, as well as for animal feeding operations.

“This is a very popular program in Kansas, and I know fall is a busy season. The NRCS wants everyone to have the opportunity to develop a conservation plan and submit an application in time,” said Banks.

Applications are accepted year round, but those received by November 21, 2014, will be evaluated for fiscal year 2015 funding. Applicants must meet certain eligibility requirements.

“EQIP also helps address the unique circumstances of socially disadvantaged, veteran, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers, who have natural resource concerns that need to be addressed on their land,” said Banks. Qualifying Kansas producers compete separately and receive higher payment rates.

For more information visit the Kansas NRCS Web site www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs or your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. To find a service center near you, check your telephone book under “United States Government” or on the Internet at offices.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Conservation Field Day

South Barber 5th and 6th graders enjoyed a beautiful autumn day on the Z Bar Ranch on October 15. Once again, Keith and Eva Yearout hosted the event.

First stop was an up close and personal encounter with the bison, then off to the prairie dog town. Eva shared facts on both wildlife species, their habitat, and characteristics.

A hike to the river worked off a sack lunch and some energy. Upon returning to the camp-site, Chris Shrack (KS Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism) gave a talk on ‘Wildlife Safety in Your Backyard’, which included a live snake and various wildlife furs.

NRCS staff demonstrated the stream flow trailer where livestock and barns were swept away with the raging waters of an unprotected stream bank. The rain fall simulator provided impressive results of rainfall impact on clean vs. mulched fields. And what better way to end the day than eating a soil profile, complete with chocolate pudding, sprinkles, and M&Ms.

North Barber 5th and 6th graders are scheduled for their conservation field day on April 17, 2015.



Chris Shrack held the students' interest with a 'smelly snake'.

Eva draws attention to the meandering Salt Fork Arkansas River.



Trees Are Good, Right?

By Carl Jarboe

When I was growing up my mother always talked about wanting to live in N.E. Kansas where there were trees everywhere. She grew up in Barber County where in the 1930s there weren't many trees. I'm sure many of you reading this remember those times.

What a change from then to now. As we look across the landscape we see many trees where once there were few. Trees are a growing problem, pardon the pun. Removing trees will allow you to grow more grass for grazing and improve water infiltration to revitalize springs. Just a couple of reasons for cleaning up the landscape so to speak.

What about wildlife? Are more trees good for the deer, turkey, quail, and pheasant and oh yes the Lesser Prairie Chicken? That is a tough question to answer and is better addressed by a wildlife biologist but I will make a few observations. We had more quail in the 60's and 70's when we had fewer trees. Turkeys have been increasing since the 60's and 70's but we have more trees now. Pheasant, if you can find any, don't live in the trees and their numbers have been decreasing. How about deer? More trees equal more deer right? Actually some top quality White Tail Bucks can be found on a ranch just across the Barber County line in Comanche County and they cut every tree they find. They even cut the Cottonwoods and Elm trees. I might add they also have a good population of Quail and Lesser Prairie Chicken. Interesting don't you think?

Trees are good for windbreaks and are great for providing shade and some beauty, especially ornamental trees that flower. I have a love of trees having worked in the nursery & landscape industry for 30 plus years. As a landscape designer I learned that while there are good locations for trees, there are some areas where they don't belong. I think that for the most part trees do not belong on the open range. The draws and creek or river bottoms, yes, but not the upland pastures that are intended to grow grass.

If I've raised some questions in your mind about trees on your ranch or a ranch you run cattle on give us a call. If you have thought about a windbreak and need some help with its design or need to revitalize an existing windbreak give us a call.

Who are we? I work for the Natural Resource Conservation Service, NRCS. Along with the Barber County Conservation District we have programs to assist with projects such as cutting trees in pastures, windbreak renovation and multiple other options. We have the contacts to put you with the right people to assist you with your concerns, make a plan and maybe assist with some cost share for the project. It's a win, win situation. Improved grazing improves the profitability of the ranch. Improving wildlife habitat can add to the ranch's income by improving grazing and opportunities for hunting leases. Plant a windbreak to save some \$\$ on energy in the winter. What have you got to lose by making the call?

Yes, trees are good when they are in the right place.

CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST



Using the theme '*DIG DEEPER: Mysteries in the Soil*' 292 Barber County students submitted entries for this year's conservation poster contest. And the winners are:

K—1

Maddox Hargett

Cason Adams

Maddie Cunningham

2—3

Alexavier Nittler

Karsyn Jacobson

Mackenzie Woods

4—6

Carson Cargill

Madison Pilkington

Cheyenne Lukens

7—9

Adrianna Morgenstern

Riston Landwehr

Cody Smith

10—12

Nolan Wilson

Jeremiah Powell

Blayze Scott

The High Cost of Letting the Little Things Go.....

By Carl Jarboe

We all have plenty to do, lots on our plates as is often said today. So how do we find time for maintenance items? The truth is we have to find time or just simply make the time to take care of what we have. It's easy to drive by a problem and say we need to fix that someday isn't it. We all have done it. So how do we get those things done?

I think the best incentive is cost. When we pass by the problem hole in a field and don't fill it that hole gets bigger. What is the cost of breaking an axle when you fall into that hole while farming late at night? Can you afford the trip to the hospital to fix you up or the time away from the farm?

How about pond dam maintenance? Do you have trees growing on your pond dams? Tree roots growing into the dam can cause structural problems. Removing all trees from dams is one of the best management practices you can do to help your pond dam last.

What about your principle spillway pipe? Is it free from debris? This goes for tile inlet risers as well I might add. Keeping tree branches, grass and logs cleaned up away from these pipes allows them to work the way they are designed.

What's the cost of replacing a dam or a terrace? Would you miss the water supply if it is gone tomorrow because your pipe washed out or your dam failed? How about the cost of fixing the terrace after it has a cut washed through it because you didn't keep the tile inlet riser maintained? Add to that cost of the axle that was broken because you drove into the ditch caused by the lack of maintenance.

Do you farm around trees? The cost of replacing a mirror on your combine might make the cost of cutting down a tree seem worth it. What about the lost income due to low yields caused by tree competition around the edge of your crop fields? Maybe trees have started growing in your waterway or how about your ponds' emergency spillway. Once again what's the cost of replacing an emergency spillway or waterway because trees were growing there and you lost your grass cover that holds the soil? With the cost of fence building as high as it is allowing trees to grow up in fence lines doesn't make sense either.

All of the things I mentioned above are just maintenance items but they do take time. Try planning one day or ½ of a day a month for just one project. Clean off one pond dam, clear a ½ mile of fence of all brush and trees these little things add up in the long run. Maybe you go to one field a month and just clean up some trees that are starting along the edge of the field or check and cleanup or repair your risers on your tile outlets.

A little maintenance goes a long way in protecting investments. Just like changing oil in your machinery your structural practices needs some attention each year. Keep up with it and it won't take too long to do.

I think your investments are worth protecting, don't you? Come to think of it I've got some fence that needs the cedars taken out too. If you are available the first Saturday in December you could help me get started on one of my own projects. It could be fun.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Barber County Conservation District will be held January 17, 2015, 6:30 PM, at the Heritage Center in Medicine Lodge. The business meeting will include highlights of the past year's activities, full disclosure of the District's finances, and election of two supervisors.

A catered meal will be provided by the banks of Barber County. Bankers Conservation Awards will be presented, as well as Grasslands Awards. All entries from the Conservation Poster Contest will be on display, with special recognition to the top three winners in each category. Many Barber County businesses will donate door prizes for the event.

You may make your reservation to attend by calling the conservation office at (620) 886-5311, ext 3.