

# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
BARBER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Volume 21, Issue 3

September 2008

## Management After A Fire

---

*Whether to promote a healthier stand of grass by removing litter and dead material, reduce wildfire hazards, or to control the invasion and/or spread of undesirable woody species, fire has long been used as an effective tool for managing grasslands. In recent years, a number of fires throughout the nation have burned out of control, damaging property and causing great concern and fear of fires. Barber County has not been immune from wildfires, and as we wrap up this year and look towards next year's grazing season, it is a good time to think about how to manage grass after a fire.*

*First, it is important to understand a little about the physiology of native grasses in this area. In general, only about 10% of the growth for the year occurs by the end of April. By the end of May, however, 34% of the annual growth has occurred, 66% by the end of June, and 93% by the end of August. Of course, several factors play into growth curve, including moisture, temperatures, soil health, etc., but it can be used as a general rule of thumb. By implementing a burn in early spring, you can reduce the amount of competition from cool season plants, litter, and trees, while only 1-2% of the native grass growth has occurred. This leaves the remainder of the year for the native grass species to flourish. For a native grass plant to continue to produce at a high level year after year, a well-established root system is vital. In order for a plant to capture enough sunlight to build up reserve energy for the next year, 50% of the plant must remain at the end of the growing season. If only a fourth of the plant is left (an overgrazed situation), the roots will not be able to store enough reserves for the next year, and the growth will be stunted.*

*With these principles in mind, it is apparent that the timing of a burn is critical. A fire in early spring is most beneficial for warm season native grasses as long as there is adequate moisture, while a fire in mid or late summer can set a grass stand back. For example, in early August of this year, a fire spread over a large area of southwest Barber County. Most all vegetation was completely eradicated from the soil's surface, and according to the growth curve, only about 10% of the growth for the entire year has yet to occur. Therefore, instead of leaving half of the plant to collect the sunlight and store energy in its root system for next year, very little of the plant will remain, and it can be certain that growth next year will be hindered. A tremendous amount of seed lies idle in the soil waiting for a time such as this to emerge. Most of the plants that will emerge early next season will be annual forbs and they will probably dominate the terrain, although it can be expected that warm-season native grass species will appear as well.*

*So what kind of grazing-lands management should be considered to ensure the quickest recovery and continued production of grass after such a fire? Utilizing the growth curve of the native grass species will be very important in order to give the plants the most opportunity to improve. Therefore, giving the warm-season plants rest in the later portion of the growing season will make certain that enough leaf surface will be left to capture energy for the roots. Some pastures may not be grazed at all next year, which will help the grasses recover, but it is also important to reduce the competition for sunlight, water, and nutrients. The abundant forbs or weeds next spring will contend for each resource, so another beneficial practice would be to flash-graze the weeds in early spring. This can be accomplished by stocking the pastures with a high stock density for a short period of time. Cattle will graze the weeds and forbs early in their growth, allowing more sunlight and water to reach the native plants. Lastly, plenty of moisture and proper timing of that moisture will be important, which unfortunately, we can't control, so let's all keep our fingers crossed for a wet spring. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to visit about your operation, feel free to call or stop by the office.*

---

# National RC&D Week

---

The Sunflower Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Area, Inc. along with the State Association of Kansas RC&D Councils joins the 375 RC&D Councils across the country in celebrating “National RC&D Week”. Today, there are RC&D Councils in every state.

In the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962, Congress established a unique program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture called the Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D) that empowered rural people to help themselves through projects relating to land conservation, community development, land management and water management. RC&D councils work in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on community projects.

The Sunflower RC&D was the first Council established in Kansas in 1969. The area has expanded from the original seven (7) counties to eight and includes Barber, Comanche, Cowley, Harper, Kingman, Kiowa, Pratt and Sumner Counties. To date, there are twelve RC&D Councils in Kansas serving 93 of the state’s 105 counties.

Each year the Sunflower RC&D Council works with dozens of project sponsors and hundreds of partners to serve thousands of citizens across the eight-county area.

"RC&D councils are locally organized and sponsored. The program provides a great way for local residents to join together and focus energy and resources on their community and region," states Bill Hunter, President of Sunflower RC&D Area, Inc.

Last year, Sunflower RC&D completed 18 of the 41 projects on the books as part of its Annual Plan of Work. The combined total contributions were \$1,749,264 provided in federal, state and local government, private and other donations.

The council is currently working with 51 projects with 26 on schedule to be completed during the year. Projects include conservation and environmental education programs; historic arboretum restorations; tourism development; scenic by ways; hunters feeding the hungry; business coaching through Enterprise Facilitation; recycling; household hazardous waste disposal; fitness paths, community celebrations, watershed planning; leadership development; wildlife habitat; capacity building; disaster relief and renewable energy development, to name a few.

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, Sunflower RC&D will be holding their 40<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. The meeting, which will be held in Kingman, will have a guest speaker and cover this year’s accomplishments as well as look towards next year’s projects/activities.

The mission of the Sunflower RC&D Area, Inc. is: “To serve as a grassroots team, coordinating efforts which conserve and develop our natural, economic and human resources, while improving quality of life for the eight-county area.”

RC&D Councils are made up of volunteers who serve their communities in all 50 states and US territories. RC&D Councils identify, address and solve the challenges needed to sustain and improve the quality of life in their own communities. To learn more about the

## Pipe For Sale

---

The conservation district stocks corrugated plastic pipe in 4” to 36” diameters, as well as a large inventory of fittings. Check us out for all your drainage projects, from tile outlet terraces to culverts, all at competitive prices. If we don’t have it, we are happy to place special orders.

And don’t forget our 19-strand galvanized lite cable for electric fencing. Durability and ease of handling with no “slinky” effect has made this a popular product throughout the state.



*The District is seeking nominations for Bankers Awards in Soil Conservation, Windbreaks, and Wildlife Habitat. Please call us at 886-5311 ext 3 with your nominations.*

## 2008 Poster Contest ~ *Water is Life*

"Water is Life" is the theme for the 2008 National Association of Conservation Districts Poster Contest. Each year the District supplies poster materials and a theme to school age kids (K-12) in Barber County for participation in the contest. Posters are judged at the local level, with the top 3 winners in 6 categories receiving special recognition. First place winners in each category are on display at the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts' annual meeting in Wichita, and are eligible for the national contest. All posters are displayed at the USDA Service Center October 6-10, and at the District's annual meeting in January. Stop by and check out the art work.

## Fun, Fun at the Fair

On Thursday, July 31, we loaded up the truck and headed south to once again set up for the fair. This year's booth highlighted Recycling and the Non Point Source Pollution Program. With an abundance of literature and a great photo display there was plenty for everyone to see. The District put out event recycling bins across the fair grounds and everyone put them to great use. The winners of our door prizes this year are Paige Lambert who won the kids prize of a 6-pack soft cooler filled with lots of candy, and Ben Steinmetz who won the adult prize of a wand sprinkler. Congrats to both of them!! It was great to see everyone at the fair this year!! We can't wait to see you next year!!



2008 Barber County Fair Display

## Comedy Corner

### **A grandson's coffee**

A Grandmother was surprised by her 7 year old grandson one morning when he had made her coffee.

She drank what was the worst cup of coffee in her life. When she got to the bottom there were three of those little green army men in the cup. She said, "Honey, what are the army men doing in my coffee?"

Her grandson said, "Grandma, it says on TV-"The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup!"



**Barber County  
Conservation District  
800 W. Third Ave.  
Medicine Lodge, KS 67104**

PRSR STD  
U.S. Postage Paid  
USDA Service Center  
Permit No. 1  
Medicine Lodge, KS 67104

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CONSERVATION PRACTICES AND AGRTO LEARN MORE ABOUT CONSERVATION PRACTICES AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS, VISIT THESE WEB SITES:

[WWW.ACCESSKANSAS.ORG/KSCC](http://WWW.ACCESSKANSAS.ORG/KSCC)  
[WWW.SWCS.ORG](http://WWW.SWCS.ORG)  
[WWW.UNL.EDU/NAC](http://WWW.UNL.EDU/NAC)  
[WWW.NASCANET.ORG](http://WWW.NASCANET.ORG)  
[WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV](http://WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV)  
[WWW.RCDNET.ORG](http://WWW.RCDNET.ORG)  
[WWW.NACDNET.ORG](http://WWW.NACDNET.ORG)  
[WWW.COCORAHNS.ORG](http://WWW.COCORAHNS.ORG)  
[WWW.FSA.USDA.GOV](http://WWW.FSA.USDA.GOV)  
[WWW.CTIC.PURDUE.EDU/CTIC/CTIC.HTML](http://WWW.CTIC.PURDUE.EDU/CTIC/CTIC.HTML)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, self-orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (Voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326 W. Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW Washington D.C., 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (Voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Barber County Conservation District  
Board of Supervisors**

Chairman ..... Georgi Dawson  
Vice Chairman ..... Calvin Boyd  
Treasurer ..... Matt Cantrell  
Member ..... Ted Alexander  
Member ..... Sam Baier

The Board meets on the first Tuesday of each month at the Barber County USDA Service Center. If you have any questions or comments for the Board of Supervisors, or suggestions for this newsletter, please call (620) 886-5311.

**Notice:** When you call the Barber County USDA Service Center at (620) 886-5311 an auto attendant will answer the phone. You may enter any of the following numbers during the message:

2 - Farm Service Agency  
3 - NRCS and Conservation District

If you have a rotary phone, please stay on the line and a person will assist you.