



Conservation Conversation

Official Newsletter of the Barber County Conservation District

Volume 25, Issue 2

Poster Contest Winners

This year's poster contest was an exciting one! This year's theme of Soil to Spoon encouraged 225 hopeful kids to participate in this year's poster contest. The competition was fierce this year. All of the posters were excellent in content and quality, but we could only have one winner in each category to move on to state. And the winner's are.....

K - 1st

1st - Kobie Keimig

2nd - Camron Dorsey

3rd - Brooke Boyce

2nd - 3rd

1st - Rachel Fischer

2nd Clare Pollock

3rd - Baylan Alexander

4th - 6th

1st - Cali Scripsick

2nd - Adrienne Allison

3rd Krista Gerstner - Tie
McKenzie Gerber - Tie

7th - 9th

1st - Sierra Cargill

2nd - Cade Doornbos

3rd - Gracie Burnheide

10th - 12th

1st - Dwight Seipel

2nd - Quintyn Zahn

3rd - Draven Duggan

Join us at the Barber County Conservation District Annual meeting in January to congratulate the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners at the county & state levels!!!!

**BE SURE AND VISIT US ON THE WEB @
WWW.BARBERCOUNTYCONSERVATIONDISTRICT.COM
AND**

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION INCLUDING SCHOLARSHIPS, COST SHARE, AND EVENTS!

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.

Eating ‘Cake’ With The Buffalo

Conservation Day at the Z Bar Ranch brought lots of new experiences for 49 Barber County 5th graders, one of which was eating ‘cake’ with the buffalo. As Eva Yearout, co-manager of the Z Bar Ranch with husband Keith, explained that the buffalo would come up for cake when they heard the door on the feed box banging, I’m almost certain some of them thought of cupcakes as they asked if they could have some. Being the gracious hostess that she is, of course Eva said ‘sure they could have some’ but went on to explain that the cake was grain formed into pellets, used as a supplement to their grass diet. Almost all the curious 5th graders tasted the cake as the buffalo crunched on the pellets about 40’ away from the group.



The kids met at the ‘pens’ where their entire classes were weighed then run through the sorting pens and squeeze chute. They stopped by a prairie dog town, then off to where the buffalo roam. It is really an impressive sight to see hundreds of buffalo coming to the sound of the feed truck from as far away over the rolling hills of the prairie as you can see.

The kids stopped by the ranch guest house for a sack lunch provided by Corona Hoch, Barber County Farm Bureau, then off for a 15 minute hike to the dry river bed of the Salt Fork where they dug for water: I don’t believe anyone got that deep and pouring bottled water into a deep hole is an old trick. Back at the guest house, they were introduced to Charlie Swank’s (Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Biologist) bull snake. After refusing to eat the fat mouse offered to it, the kids were allowed to pet the snake before Charlie put it back in its box.

NRCS Technician, Carl Jarboe, talked to the kids about the layers of a soil profile, leading up to a treat provided by Norm Clouse of White’s Foodliner, in the form of edible soil profile dessert cups. As the North and South Barber County school buses bounced down the dusty road back to their classrooms, choruses of “thank you” could be heard from the tired 5th graders as they expressed their appreciation to Keith and Eva Yearout and the Barber County Conservation District staff for a fun filled educational experience.

Barber County Conservation District Board of Supervisors

- Chairman Sam Baier
- Vice ChairmanGeorgi Dawson
- Treasurer..... Calvin Boyd
- MemberMatt Cantrell
- Member Ted Alexander

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.

Claims Filing Period for Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Who Claim Past Discrimination at USDA to Open on September 24, 2012

WASHINGTON, Sept. 24, 2012- Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between September 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013. "Hispanic and women farmers who believe they have faced discriminatory practices from the USDA must file a claim by March 25, 2013 in order to have a chance to receive a cash payment or loan forgiveness," said Secretary Vilsack. "The opening of this claims process is part of USDA's ongoing efforts to correct the wrongs of the past and ensure fair treatment to all current and future customers."

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

The Department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants, around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program so they have the opportunity to participate. Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in your communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Claims Period: September 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider. Under Secretary Vilsack's leadership, USDA has instituted a comprehensive plan to strengthen the Department as a model service provider and to ensure that every farmer and rancher is treated equally and fairly as part of "a new era of civil rights" at USDA. This Administration has made it a priority to resolve all of the past program class action civil rights cases facing the Department, and today's announcement is another major step towards achieving that goal. In February 2010, the Secretary announced the Pigford II settlement with African American farmers, and in October 2010, he announced the Keepseagle settlement with Native American farmers. Both of those settlements have since received court approval. Unlike the cases brought by African American and Native American farmers, the cases filed by Hispanic and women farmers over a decade ago were not certified as class actions and are still pending in the courts as individual matters. The claims process provides a voluntary alternative to continuing litigation for Hispanic and female farmers and ranchers who want to use it.

Audio and video public service announcements in English and Spanish from Secretary Vilsack and downloadable print and web banner ads on the Hispanic and women farmer claims process are available at:

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=PSAs_Print_and_WebBanner_Ads.xml

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).

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.

Cover Crop/Soil Health Demonstration Study Set Up

With the growing interest in cover crops, and questions about the benefits and impacts with their use in this portion of the state; NRCS, Barber County Conservation District, Division of Conservation, and SARE, have come together to install a Cover Crop Test Plot in southeast Barber County. The study, which will take place over the next 3-5 years, will analyze the impacts on: soil moisture, compaction, plant-available nutrients, and the economics of each. Look for more information in the future to come from this exciting and promising soil-health tool. If you have any questions about this specific study, or just questions in general about the pros and cons of cover crops, or how to incorporate them into your operation, please feel free to contact the office here in Medicine Lodge.

No-Till Education Grant Approved

Application to the Kansas Department of Agriculture - Department of Conservation (KDA-DOC) for No-Till Education Funds was approved for \$2500. The Conservation District requested the maximum amount from the DOC to purchase signage and more equipment for a cover crop test plot, a collaborative project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, K-State, KDA-DOC, and Green Cover Seed.

Establishment of the long-term test plot will allow the study and measurement of the various benefits that cover crops are believed to provide. The goals of the study are to:

- Demonstrate that cover crop mixes do not use up the available moisture in the soil profile.
- Measure the positive effects of cover crop mixes on soil compaction issues.
- Quantify the nutrient benefits obtained from cover crop mixes.
- Identify and remedy any difficulties with planting that may be associated with these mixes.
- Determine the cost: benefit and feasibility of incorporating cover crop mixes into operation.

Stop by the conservation office to learn more about this exciting project.

Scholarship Available

The Division of Conservation (DOC) has allocated \$25,000 in FY 2013 for No-Till education in the Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program. These funds can be used to sponsor landowners to attend the No-Till on the Plains Winter Conference in January 2013. Landowners must be first time attendees to the No-Till on the Plains Winter Conference to be eligible for reimbursement of their registration fees to the conference. Contact the conservation office to make application for funds to attend this conference.

Emergency Drought Initiative

In August, Secretary of Agriculture, Dale Rodman announced an Emergency Drought Livestock Water Supply Initiative to provide cost-share assistance to livestock producers in drought-stricken Kansas. The State Conservation Commission took action to make the cancelled FY 2012 cost share funding available to Kansas Conservation Districts in providing cost-share assistance targeted at improving existing livestock water supplies.

While the application period ran from August 2 through September 15, funding was limited and applications were approved on a first-come first-served basis. Barber County was able to secure \$14,000 in supplemental funding to address drought livestock water supply needs for up to five projects as allowed by the DOC.

Priority was given to pastures where there was no livestock water supply at the time or a very limited livestock water supply that would significantly impact the use of the pasture for the upcoming winter or spring grazing season. All livestock water development practices were eligible under this initiative, with the addition of a new practice, pond restoration.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a program which producers should be aware of. Applications are taken through continuous sign-ups but those received by January 18, 2013 will be processed in the next evaluation period. You must be the operator of the land to make application for this program.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by (1) undertaking additional conservation activities and (2) improving and maintaining existing conservation systems. CSP provides financial and technical assistance to help land stewards conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.

The program provides many conservation benefits including improvement of water and soil quality, wildlife habitat enhancements, and adoption of conservation activities that address the effects of climate change. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help potential applicants determine if CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations, and potential payments. It is available from local NRCS offices and on the CSP web page <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrce/main/national/programs/financial/csp>.

As part of the CSP application process, applicants will work with NRCS field personnel to complete the resource inventory using a Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT). The CMT determines the conservation performance for existing and new conservation activities. The applicant's conservation performance will be used to determine eligibility, ranking, and payments.

Visit the NRCS National Web site, <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/home> and connect with an NRCS office near you, <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contract/states>.

Bankers Tour

Committee members met on October 9 for a farm tour of 2012 nominations for the Kansas Bankers Conservation Awards Program. Nominations were accepted until October 8 by committee chairman Tim Marshall, Barber County Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent. Sponsored by the Kansas Bankers Association (KBA) the purpose of the program is to stimulate a greater interest in the conservation of Kansas' agricultural and natural resources by giving recognition to those farmers and landowners who have made outstanding progress in practicing conservation on their farms.

Two selections were made to receive this year's soil conservation awards, one for grazing lands health and one for soil quality. Recipients of these awards will be recognized at the Annual Meeting of the Conservation District on January 19.

EQIP Application Evaluation Cutoff is Friday, November 16, 2012

Salina, Kansas, October 9, 2012—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Eric B. Banks, announced that the application evaluation cutoff date will be, **Friday, November 16, 2012**, 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 and rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland.

"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 16, 2012, will be evaluated for fiscal year 2013 funding. Applicants must meet certain eligibility requirements.

"EQIP helps address the unique circumstances of socially disadvantaged, 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 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.

District Sales and Services

If you've been thinking about trying no-till on some of your farm acres without going to the expense of purchasing a new drill for yourself, contact the Conservation Office to rent their 15-foot Great Plains no-till drill. This would be a great opportunity to see for yourself how much residue you can successfully drill into, and the benefits of no-till farming. Also available is our 12-foot Horizon grass drill.

The Barber County Conservation District is an authorized and Kansas registered seed dealer. Contact the conservation office for all your seeding needs; native grass mixes, cool season grasses, bermudagrass, legumes, and wildflowers.

The Conservation District carries a large inventory of corrugated, high density polyethylene pipe and single wall plastic pipe for your drainage needs. See us for competitive pricing.

We offer the New Zealand fencing system featuring a 19 strand lite cable for cross fencing. Special feature of the cable is the 'no-slinky' effect, providing ease of handling for producers. Our fence inventory includes fiberglass posts, metal clips, and insulated post wraps.



Cover Crops Trap Residual Nitrogen Following Drought

By Lyle Frees, Natural Resources Specialist,
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Salina, Kansas

Salina, Kansas, September 17, 2012—This is the perfect year to plant cover crops in Kansas, according to soils and agronomy experts with U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Besides the obvious negative impact on crop yields, the drought will leave residual nitrate in the soil at harvest time. Following harvest, residual nitrates can remain in the soil. Any rainfall above the water holding capacity of your soil can potentially allow nitrate to leach out the bottom of the root zone.

If more typical precipitation returns in November through April, the amount of nitrate lost can be much greater this year than usual, leading to nutrient loading of local waters and eventually to the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico.

Recycle with Cover Crops

This is how cover crops can help. Cover crops will scavenge residual nitrogen and recycle it through their plant biomass. When the cover crops decompose next year, some of the nitrogen taken up by the cover crops will be released for use by the next cash crop, and some will go towards building soil organic matter.

Fall-planted cover crops would be a good investment by farmers this year to benefit both their own farms and regional water quality.

Nitrogen Scavengers

The best nitrogen-scavenging cover crops include oats, cereal rye, or annual ryegrass mixed with oilseed radish. If a farmer is interested in fall grazing, then turnips or crimson clover could be mixed with the oats and cereal rye.

Cover crops will help farmers recoup part of their fertilizer nitrogen investment from last season, and will improve soil organic matter and soil biological activity.

Cover crops will also be very useful after soybeans for adding organic matter and trapping nitrogen released by decomposing soybean residues.

Producers Reap Benefits from Cover Crops

NRCS soils expert Ray Archuleta, recently spoke throughout Kansas to farmers and NRCS employees. He provided farmers and NRCS employees the following key messages about increasing soil health using cover crops:

Add living roots (cover crops) to the soil during more months of the year to increase organic matter and improve soil health, along with eliminating tillage activities.

Cover Crops Trap Residual Nitrogen Following Drought

- Legume cover crops act as natural fertilizers, while grasses act as scavengers of nutrients often lost after harvest or during winter.
 - Diversity above ground improves diversity below ground, which helps create healthy productive soils.
 - Cover crops should be an integral part of a cropping system. They help improve soil health by developing an ecosystem that sustains and nourishes plants, soil microbes, and beneficial insects.
 - Cover crops also protect soil against erosive heavy rains and strong winds.
- They can provide livestock producers with additional grazing or haying opportunities, and winter food and cover for birds and other wildlife.

Get More Information

Producers are encouraged to contact their crop insurance provider and their local Farm Service Agency prior to planting any cover crops to ensure their crop insurance and USDA farm program eligibility are not adversely affected since grazing of some cover crops is considered harvesting.

If you are interested in planting cover crops, visit your local NRCS office for more information on the best solution for you. Federal, state, or local financial assistance may be available. To find a service center near you, check in your telephone book under "United States Government" or on the Internet at offices.usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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