

Atypical Conservation District Annual Meeting

The 71st Annual Meeting of the Barber County Conservation District scheduled for January 30, 2021, will look quite different to say the least. Due to COVID restrictions and concerns for the safety and health of those who would normally participate, the Board has opted to forgo the usual banquet and awards ceremonies which are typically the highlights of the meeting.

The Board of Supervisors will convene to conduct a short business meeting to approve last year's annual meeting minutes and accept the financial report for 2020. These and 2020 District Highlights are available to the public through this newsletter, the Gyp Hill Premiere, and the District website. www.barbercountyconservationdistrict.com

Results of the election of two supervisors will also be announced at the end of the business meeting. The terms of Ann Cargill and Calvin Boyd expire this year; both have agreed to run for another term of three years each. Ballots are included in this newsletter (back page) and are to be returned to the conservation office by January 25, 2021. You can mail the enclosed ballot to us at 800 W 3rd Ave in Medicine Lodge, or you can drop off at our drop box in front of the USDA Service Center during regular business hours, 8:00 AM—5:00 PM, January 11—25, 2021.

MINUTES OF THE BARBER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

KIOWA COMMUNITY BUILDING, KIOWA, KANSAS, SATURDAY – JANUARY 25, 2020

Chairman Matt Cantrell welcomed the crowd of 83 patrons to the 70th Annual Meeting of the Barber County Conservation District. Invocation was given by Jeff Bahr. Dinner was served by Yur Place of Hardtner.

The meeting was called to order by Matt Cantrell at 6:50 P.M. and introductions were made. Ted Alexander was recognized as the 2019 Leopold Conservation Award winner.

Motion was made by Jeff Bahr to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2019 Annual Meeting as written. Motion was seconded by Harold Kline. Ted Alexander presented the highlights and financial report. Cynthia Deters moved that the financial report be received as read, seconded by Chad Forester.

John Cook conducted the election of two supervisors to fill the expiring terms of Ted Alexander and Matt Cantrell, both of whom had agreed to run again. As there were no nominations from the floor, motion was made by Harold Kline to cease nominations, seconded by Mark Watts. Ballots were collected and counted by Lody Black and Flint Rucker. Matt Cantrell and Ted Alexander were re-elected to another three-year term with forty-two (42) and forty (40) votes respectively. Dale Lonker received one vote as a write in candidate.

A slide show of 2019 District Highlights and Accomplishments was presented throughout the evening. Winners of the conservation poster contest were recognized. The top three winners in each category were presented participation certificates and gift certificates to area restaurants.

Calvin Boyd conducted the drawing for door prizes which were donated by local merchants.

Jerry Clasen, KACD Area III Representative, presented a 20 year supervisor award to Matt Cantrell.

Slide shows of the 2019 Kansas Banker's Association award winners were shown. Representing Citizens Bank of Kansas, 2019 Key Banker, Dale Lonker, along with Justin Goodno, Barber County Extension Agent, made the recognitions and presentations to 2CS Ranch LLC and Paul and Yvonne Harbaugh.

Closing announcements were made. Motion to adjourn was made by Cynthia Deters. Motion was seconded by Chad Forester. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

Matt Cantrell, Chairman

Cheryl Davis, District Manager

2020 District Highlights

Holding the Conservation District annual meeting on January 25, 2020, we thought we were off to a great start—a year filled with plans that were (like everyone else’s) soon brought to a standstill.

In reviewing the District’s 2020 highlights, we realized how many educational activities we were unable to conduct—Wildflower Tour, 5th-6th grade field days, county fair booth, range school, youth range camp, and coffee shop meetings. We were able to promote the stewardship theme “Where Would We BEE Without Pollinators” through the conservation poster contest and school newsletters, which are developed age specific to K-6 students in USD 255 and USD 254. Our most relied on form of promoting conservation issues was the quarterly District newsletter.

Despite being unable to meet face-to-face with landowners inside the USDA Service Center, we kept the phone lines and email busy in efforts to provide uninterrupted service. NRCS staff continued to provide technical assistance through field visits, developing conservation plans and designing practices to deal with erosion issues.

The Conservation District staff continued to schedule and rent their two grass drills as well as the slide-in unit and water nurse tank for range burning events. We saw a \$7000. increase in grass seed sales from the previous year; pipe sales remained steady, and fencing supplies sales rose \$3700. This growth in sales allowed us to make some much needed repairs on our rental equipment as well as increase fencing and pipe inventory for our customers.

The departure of NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist, Wyatt Sperry, left us in the capable hands of our neighboring District Conservationist, Blake McLemore, to administer new and existing contracts and train our new Soil Conservationist, Hannah Gerardy. Blake brought with him an experienced Soil Conservation Technician (Chris Hoskinson) to assist in training new hire Ronnie Landwehr.

We soon put our focus on implementing Farm Bill programs and District cost-share programs. The District received their FY 2021 allocation of \$24,843.84 from the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Department of Conservation to implement the Water Resources Cost Share Program. Practices funded in this program were as follows:

- Grassed Waterways: \$14,467.77
- Terrace construction: \$5,000.
- Critical Area Planting: \$376.09
- Livestock Watering Facility: \$5000.

Funding allocation for the Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program was \$12,083.00. Practices funded for this program are as follows:

- On-Site Waste Systems: \$8,568.28
- Critical Area Planting: \$3,520.22



An Update from Acting District Conservationist, Blake McLemore

My name is Blake McLemore, and I am serving as Acting District Conservationist for the Medicine Lodge NRCS office. I am permanently stationed at the Anthony NRCS office, but have been serving Medicine Lodge and Barber County since April (along with my Soil Conservation Technician from Anthony, Chris Hoskinson). The Medicine Lodge office has seen a complete turnover of the staff, after losing Wyatt, Carl and Lody to other opportunities they had. We miss having those boys around but are happy they were able to relocate as they had family or promotion opportunities that pulled them away. Big shoes to fill, but I believe we are well on our way to doing that. We have two new employees in Hannah Gerardy (Soil Conservationist) and Ronnie Landwehr (Jr.). They both have very strong skills that they bring to our staff. Hannah and Ronnie were thrown into the fire with 2020 challenges, but they are quick to learn and adapt. Medicine Lodge is fortunate to have them on board and I look forward to our customers getting actual one-on-one with all of us serving Barber County, as COVID-19 becomes less an issue.

Well it's safe to say most people are glad to be through 2020. It was and continues to be a challenging time. I want to thank all our customers for their patience and understanding. Simple office routines have been upended, and the NRCS & Conservation District are short-handed. Rest-assured, though, we are working very hard to service all of you (I quit counting late-night volunteer hours months ago). So, thanks for growing/raising our food, your care for our natural environment, and your patience. In the 2020 calendar year, the Medicine Lodge NRCS was able to award 17 conservation contracts (various programs), locking in \$750,871 for Barber County producers, to perform conservation on 5,705 acres. Considering all the challenges we faced (too many to go through), I am pleased we somehow got it done.

Reminder about NRCS programs - we take applications throughout the entire year. However, there are "cutoff" dates eventually announced for most programs, meaning all applications received by a certain cutoff date will be batched and evaluated for the next round of funding. Any applications that come in the day after a cutoff (or later) will likely be evaluated in the subsequent program funding period.

The Medicine Lodge NRCS is currently beginning development of conservation plans and potential contracts for the 2021 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) period. Keep in mind there is also currently a CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) signup now into February, with the Farm Service Agency. There will be signups for other NRCS programs in 2021, and they will be advertised as they become available.

Take care of you and yours, and God Bless! Blake