



Conservation Conversation

Official Newsletter of the Barber County Conservation District

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ANNUAL MEETING HONOREES

The 66th Annual Meeting of the Barber County Conservation District was held January 25. A short business meeting was held to disclose the District's financial statement as well as highlights of the past year's activities.

A delicious catered meal, sponsored by the Banks of Barber County, was enjoyed by 86 patrons. Several Kiowa and Medicine Lodge businesses donated door prizes.

Key Banker, Kelly Stewart, First State Bank in Kiowa, presented the 2015 Bankers Conservation Awards to Wanda Root for Soil Quality, and Gary and Karen Watts for Water Quality. John and Linda Forester were recognized as Outstanding Conservationists for 2015. Several conservation poster contest winners and their families attended the meeting as well.

John Cook was elected to the Board of Supervisors as out-going supervisor Sam Baier was recognized for his service of 27 years.



Gary & Karen Watts and Wanda Root

Right: Sam & Bonnie Baier

Bottom: Matt Cantrell with John & Linda Forester



Kids, clockwise: Daisy Carlson, Mindy Wells, Clare Pollock, Cisco Armijo, Sawyer Moody, Aubrey Miltner, and Lakota Azure.



So You Have A Cost-Share Contract: Now What? By Carl Jarboe

As with all documents it's important that you read the entire contract and understand it before signing. Most State Cost share projects like you might have with the Barber County Conservation District are pretty straight forward. They include what the District will provide and what is expected of you as the recipient.

You will receive a packet with the design material for the various practices you have planned. A conservation plan map will be included showing where the practices are to be installed. The design sheets show the items required to complete the project to NRCS specifications so the payment can be made. Along with the design sheets you will receive documents like, practice standards, practice specifications, and operating and maintenance. These documents explain the design process, what information is used to design the project so it fits your situation and information about material that is acceptable for use. Examples might be type of pipe for a livestock water pipeline, or the number of gallons of water required in a watering facility (Stock Tank) based on the type and size of animals that are being watered. If excavation is required you will have a one call letter included. This will have the information needed to place a call to have buried lines located before you dig.

Wow, that's lots of reading material. Actually it's not bad reading if you are interested in the process. Many producers hand over the design to a contractor of their choice and that's the end of it for them. Those who want to understand the process and maybe have a little input in the design, which is always appreciated, will read the information so they can make informed decisions.

Tank locations for example may change due to the location of a well or existing pipeline. Often NRCS will have a so called "ideal" location based on pasture size and grazing habits. We are always trying to improve grazing distribution. Sometimes the perfect location to NRCS may not be where it fits your grazing system. Just mention that and it's likely the tank can be relocated. It may be dependent on available water, again not being in the perfect location but more readily serves the needs of livestock. Don't hesitate to ask if you have a question about the designs.

Having an understanding of the process helps you as the producer in several ways. First, your understanding of the project will help you know what to expect. Secondly it will prepare you for what you need to do to receive your payment. And thirdly you will know what is expected from you as far as operation and maintenance.

When there are issues it is usually because the project doesn't get started or finished in a timely fashion. Remember, when you are awarded cost share funds the dollars associated with your project are not available to someone else who could use some assistance. It is unfair to other county residents if you tie up those dollars and don't use them.

It's pretty simple and straight forward. After you are awarded cost share dollars proceed as soon as is practical with the project. Keep the Conservation District in the loop, let them know you are starting and when you expect to be finished. This will speed up the payment process.

If you have any questions about available cost-share programs contact the Barber County Conservation District and they will be glad to explain what is available and how to apply for some cost-share assistance on your project.

April Is State Cost-Share Sign-up Month

If you have a project or a resource concern that needs to be addressed and would like to apply for cost-share assistance, you can apply at the Conservation Office April 1—April 30. All applications will be ranked according to a system developed by the Barber County Conservation District. The ranking system ensures fairness to all landowners and makes certain cost-share funds are used to meet local conservation priorities.

Funding for the Water Resources Cost-Share Program (WRCSP) and the Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program (NPS) will be available July 1. Funding is provided by the Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture (DOC) through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund.

Terrace, waterway, and underground outlet construction as well as livestock watering facilities, wells, and pipelines are just a few of the practices offered through the WRCSP. The NPS Program also offers repair of failed septic systems that are at least 10 years old and have been determined as failed by the county sanitarian. Conservation office staff would be happy to provide you with a list of other available conservation practices offered through these two cost-share programs.

“Are you Ready for Rain?”

By Toni M. Flax, NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist: Hill City, Kansas

During a recent conversation with a colleague, he told me the story about two farmers from a recent soil health field day. One neighbor asked the other “Are you ready for spring?” The guy thought about it, looked at his neighbor and said, “You know, I’m not sure if I am or not?” The neighbor had asked a small talk question, but he unknowingly got my colleague and me to thinking—spring means rain and are we REALLY ready for rain?

Kansas has faced several years of continual drought and most conversations start with someone asking “Are you ready for rain?” How are we sure if we are ready for rain? Is our ground ready to take up and effectively use the next rain Mother Nature gives us or will it just run off and do no good?

This topic not only pertains to cropland, but also greatly impacts rangeland. Here are three concepts to think over the next time you are asked “are you ready for the rain?”

First, what does the above ground plant cover look like? A single rain drop falls to the earth with great force and can cause an erosion event to occur on bare ground. Using the old rule of thumb “take half, leave half,” we can slow down the velocity of the rain drops when they hit the plants’ leaves and make their way to the ground below and soak in. Also, leaves and other biomass provide insulation for the ground, causing less water evaporation and keeping the soils at a temperature that allows for healthy soil microbial activity to take place.

Second, when it comes to a plant’s biomass, two-thirds is below ground. Having leafy material above ground leads to having a healthy root system and a healthy root system is what keeps the plants going and in place during an erosion event. Think of it like this, the roots are a factory, they take up the water and nutrients to grow more leaves and root material, and the leaves are the solar panels that, in turn, soak up the sunlight and carbon dioxide needed to drive the growth. When the animal grazes off the leaves the plant has to put its resources to growing more leaves. If the leaves keep getting grazed off, then the plant replaces them making no effort to grow roots which stores the carbohydrates for the winter. This causes the roots to “die off” and makes the plant weak and not able to take up the moisture and use it the next spring. Some root “die off” is to be expected, this helps form “water highways” to help the water infiltration further down into the soil profile.

Third is the concept of plant diversity. Many people believe that grass is the only type of plant to have on rangeland and that any forbs or legumes are bad. This is not the case. Even if livestock do not eat forbs or legumes, they provide a great benefit to the system. They provide differing types of root structures. Grass roots are fibrous with many off shoots and are shallow in comparison to the forbs, which have long tuberous roots that can reach water and minerals further down in the soil profile. Legumes also provide needed nitrogen for plants and other microbial activity. This microbial activity breaks down the organic matter then provides mineral back to the plant.

These concepts are important for a healthy rangeland system which is a never ending ecological cycle. If you are interested in learning more about getting your rangeland “Ready for Rain,” contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office or conservation district office located at 800 W 3rd Avenue in Medicine Lodge. More information is also available on the Kansas Web site at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Educating our youth on conservation issues is important to the Conservation District. Two scholarship opportunities are available through the District at this time:

The John Farney Memorial Scholarship is a \$1000 scholarship sponsored by the Barber County Conservation District. The scholarship is awarded annually to a student who is entering at least his/her second year of college. Applicants must be pursuing a college degree in a conservation related field. The applicant must also be a resident of Barber County. The deadline for applications will be April 30, 2016. Applications are available at the conservation office, 800 W 3rd Avenue, Medicine Lodge, Kansas. You may also call (620) 886-5311 for more information.

Kansas Range Youth Camp is July 12-15, 2016 at Camp Mennoscah, Murdock, KS. A scholarship is available to upcoming high school Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors with a serious interest in rangeland ecology. The camp is designed to give students a basic understanding of the principles of rangeland ecology, including plant physiology, plant identification, ecological sites, range condition, and trend. Additional topics discussed at camp are animal behavior, animal nutrition, wildlife use of rangelands, and calculating stocking rates. Registration deadline is June 1, 2016. Stop by the Conservation Office for an application and more information.