

BANKERS WINNERS

Craig & Sharla Mease and Pam & Buddy Rickard

Craig Mease & Buddy Rickard operate around 4,500 acres in northeast Barber County, some of which is irrigated, and nearly 700 acres of grass. By implementing a reduced-tillage system in the late '90's they were able to introduce milo, corn, cotton, & sunflowers into a rotation that had been primarily wheat. In 2001, they converted completely over to a no-till system, which they have been implementing ever since. Some of the noticeable benefits from switching completely over to no-till include: moisture conservation and better utilization of moisture allowing them to be more flexible with their rotation, better moisture absorption allowing them to get back in the field sooner, gradual improvement of the soil's overall health, and a great reduction in soil erosion losses. Congratulations to the Mease & Rickard family's on their 2008 Kansas Bankers Association Award for Soil Conservation.



From left: SDC Jarred Kneisel, Bankers Winners Sharla & Craig Mease, Key Banker Dale Lonker, Bankers Winners June & Duane Gerber

Duane & June Gerber

Duane & June Gerber operate around 1,300 acres of grassland and about 100 acres of cropland. In the 12 years they have been operating the ranch, some of which has been in June's family for over 100 years, the Gerber's have attended several informational and educational seminars on grassland management and the use of alternative forages. Using funding assistance, as well as planning, through the EQIP program, the Gerber's built cross-fences to divide up their pastures, installed livestock water pipelines and tanks with solar pumps, and began to use a rotational grazing system. Duane & June continue to work towards making improvements to their ground by reducing cedar trees and burning to improve the grass. Looking to the future, the Gerber's will continue to fine-tune their rotational grazing and burning systems, and would also like to develop more watering sources so that they can keep the cattle out of the stream to improve water quality and retire the windmills. Congratulations to the Gerber's on their 2008 Kansas Bankers Association Award for Soil Conservation.

"PETAL" ON OVER TO THE 2009 BARBER COUNTY WILDFLOWER TOUR

Every year on Mother's Day weekend we meet at the Medicine Lodge High School to begin a fun filled day exploring nature's wonderful wildflowers. While enjoying a continental breakfast of cinnamon rolls, fresh fruit, juice, and coffee we will view a slide show of the glorious flora of Barber County. After breakfast, we're off to the first identification stop where our expert guides will educate tour goers on the splendor of Barber County's wildflowers. After some exciting entertainment and a delicious lunch, we head back out on the range for another gaze at nature's wonders.

This year's tour is scheduled for May 9. We offer a morning tour for \$8 and full day tour for \$15 which includes a continental breakfast, lunch with entertainment, an afternoon snack, and transportation to at least two sites.

GRASSLANDS WINNERS

Barber County consists of 740,000 acres, of that, 55% or 440,000 acres is grassland. The Barber County Conservation District Board of Supervisors recognizes the Monticello Ranch operated by Nate Harts, and the DeGeer Ranch operated by Charlie, Louise, & Vaughn DeGeer, for their management of the Grasslands of Barber County.

DEGEER RANCH

The DeGeer Ranch was home-steaded in 1886 by James and Emily DeGeer, who moved from northwest Missouri to the east side on Mule Creek in southwest Barber and south-east Comanche Counties. Vaughn Sr and Hazel DeGeer began operating the east 2/3 of the ranch in about 1907. Vaughn Jr (Gene) and Mary operated the ranch until the early 1990's. Charlie and Louise DeGeer began operations of the ranch in 1979.



L to R BCCD Supervisor Ted Alexander, winners Vaughn, Charlie, and Louise DeGeer

The DeGeers graze a few cows and calves. Dave Brass currently operates most of the grass grazing yearlings. All the farm land was planted back to native grasses by 2004.

Cedars became a problem in the late 50's and grew progressively worse. In about 1977 or so Glen Snell came to Barber County and started talking about prescribed burning. Gene was uneasy about prescribed burning; however he was very astute and willing to try it. After seeing the results of fire cedar control; we have kept the matches close at hand ever since.

Charlie had burned Flint Hills grass under the direction of Drs Ed F Smith and Kling Anderson while at K-State. After moving back, he started a long period of experimentation of means and methods of prescribed burning. It unfortunately became a trial by fire for my neighbors as I learned the trade. The good thing was some of them saw the results of cedar removal and became believers.

The DeGeer state of the art of prescribed burning after green-up is well advanced; using the ranch roads (two track) and mowing well in advance; and burning between easily defended areas. This results in patch burning – the DeGeers are learning how to manage the differences in the same pasture. Chas believes that range grass management is a long term project. Time on the grass moves in decades rather than years like crops. Time and the range grasses will heal almost any mistake.

The mission of the DeGeer Ranch: Transform sunlight and rain by the photosynthetic technology of native range grass and the ruminant fermentation technology of contented bovines into succulent beef for human consumption.

NATE HARTS



L to R BCCD Supervisor Ted Alexander & winner Nate Harts

In 2003, Pete Mazeine bought the Rusk Ranch. Nate Harts took over the operation of the Monticello Ranch that same year. Working with the NRCS, Nate was able to obtain an EOIP contract on the ranch for technical assistance and cost share to develop a pipeline watering system,

cedar tree control and a grazing program.

By using the existing fences and closing gates, Nate was able to combine cattle into two grazing herds. The two herds used 15 paddocks. The management of the cow herds has allowed Nate to rest some of the paddocks that would be used for calving. Nate uses other paddocks stockpiled forage for winter feed, reducing some of the need to haul hay in the winter.

Nate soon realized that the development of water was needed if the grazing plan was to be successful. With the development of a pipeline watering system, Nate has been able to graze paddocks at different periods and allow other paddocks to rest.

Prescribed fire and mechanical clipping is used to control the cedar encroachment. Some paddocks are rested so that after the clipping is completed prescribed fire is use to clear the area of the downed cedars.

JOHN FARNEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



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 March 15, 2009. Applications are available at the conservation office, 800 W. 3rd Avenue, Medicine Lodge, Kansas. You may also call (620) 886-5311 for more information.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS UPDATE

It's time for a quick update regarding two federal programs that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently taking application for. The cut-off period for taking applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) has been extended twice already this young year, and is now set for April 10th. Due to the recent approval of the new Farm Bill, a comment period opened for input into the Interim Final Rule, which dictates how the various programs will function. This comment period is still open, so all of the rules that will govern the associated program rules are still being decided upon. Consequently, the sign-ups have been extended. What does this mean for those that are interested in applying for either the EQIP or WHIP program? With a much later deadline this year, contracts won't be approved and obligated until around July 1st. This is a later than what we typically deal with, and may not be as convenient for those participants who wish to start any practices before July. If that is the case for you, you do have the option to begin work before you have an approved contract. Participants can request a waiver to begin the work before your contract is approved; however, caution must be exercised if you are thinking about using the waiver option. Kansas has recently received the allocation for EQIP funding for 2009, which is a smaller amount than last year's allocation. This will mean that obtaining funding for a contract this year may be more competitive than in years past. The risk will be that if you request a waiver, begin work on a practice, and then don't rank high enough to be approved for funding, the work you started on will not be reimbursed. We are continuing to receive guidance and rules regarding the two programs, and will be able to better answer any questions in the near future.

Please stop by or call the office if you are interested in either program or have conservation questions in general.

A NEW INVADER

This south-central portion of Kansas boasts very productive and unique grasslands. Much emphasis has been placed on management and preservation of these acres, especially with respect to controlling the vigorous spread of the eastern red cedar. However, while working around the area, I've noticed another woody specie that has been overtaking the landscape. Sand Hill Plum (*Prunus angustifolia*), is the most common wild plum in the area. This specie has many positive benefits and traits. Because it is well-established in sandy areas, it is very affective in preventing wind and water erosion losses. It also provides excellent wildlife habitat for upland birds and other smaller animals – serving as both a roosting and escape habitat, not to mention the fruit of which provides a terrific source of food. Like many things, however, it is best to have these plants in moderation. The northern bobwhite, for example, thrives in areas that have interspersed, or areas of diverse cover types which include cropped fields, native bunch grasses, and plum thickets. These plum thickets, which quail use for loafing and winter cover, would ideally be 30 to 50 foot in diameter—much smaller than many thickets present in the area's pastures.

If you are dealing with excessive amounts of plum thickets, you can go about controlling them in a couple of different ways. Fire can be used as one method, but it will take burns in at least back-to-back years in order to control the plums, and then a follow up burn should be used two or three years later. Chemically, Sand-Hill Plums can be sprayed when in full-leaf stage and actively growing (sometime around late May to mid-June). 2,4-D Amine, LVE, or many mixtures containing 2,4-D can be used effectively to control plums. Kansas State University recommends a 2-qt/acre mix of 2,4-D, and notes that repeat applications in following years may be necessary because the complex canopy will prevent some of the understory from receiving the chemicals. Just be sure to read and follow all label directions and to make sure that the product you are using is recommended for pastures.

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

Return Service Requested

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

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

WWW.ACCESSKANSAS.ORG/KSCC

WWW.SWCS.ORG

WWW.UNL.EDU/NAC

WWW.NASCANET.ORG

WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV

WWW.RCDNET.ORG

WWW.NACDNET.ORG

WWW.COCORAH.S.ORG

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Board of Supervisors

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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.

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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.

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 NUM-
BERS 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.