



CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BARBER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Banker's Winners, Issue

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George & Rose Cloutman



Rose and George Cloutman own a quarter of ground northwest of Isabel, which Rose inherited from her mother. After years of continuous wheat under conventional tillage, a number of problems began to appear. The old existing terraces were no longer functioning – they

were too long and didn't have adequate outlets to turn the water into. There were numerous places in the old terraces that would quickly fill up with silt since they weren't draining properly, and then in the next rain event, they would top over, creating problems down the hill. When Mrs. Cloutman was informed of these issues, she signed up for technical assistance and cost-share to get the quarter back into shape.

In all, the project of building and establishing new waterways and then running terraces into them took 5 years. Today this quarter stands as a productive and well-maintained piece of farmground, and a great example of the difference that solid conservation work can make in preserving our resources for future generations.

DeGeer Ranch LLC



The DeGeer Ranch was homesteaded in 1886 by James and Emily DeGeer, who moved from northwest Missouri to the east side on Mule Creek in southwest Barber and southeast Comanche Counties. Vaughn Sr and Hazel DeGeer began operating the east 2/3 of the ranch in about 1907. Vaughn Jr (Gene) and Mary oper-

ated the ranch until the early 1990's. Charlie and Louise DeGeer began operations of the ranch in 1979.

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.

Laura Lawrenz

Monte & Deb Lawrenz



The Lawrenz's live west of Isabel. Their new windbreak consists of 2 rows of cedars on the north side of the farmstead, and a single row of more mature cedars on the west side. Laura was really the driving force behind getting this project

started. She was concerned about the condition of the existing windbreak surrounding the family's farmstead, which was no longer functioning correctly, and made it a personal goal to get a new windbreak established in order to help preserve and take care of the home that she grew up in.

The old windbreak was put in sometime around the 1930's, and consisted of pines, cedars, and hedges. Unfortunately, the pines eventually became diseased and died off, and only a few of the cedars remained. Although the hedges survived, they were just one component of the windbreak as a whole, and it was not nearly as effective. They went in and cleaned out the old windbreak with the intentions of re-establishing a new one in its place.

When Laura went off to college at K-State, she became really interested in getting the windbreak renovation project started. With the Kansas Forest Service office right there in Manhattan, she used their resources to put together a plan to develop the new windbreak. On weekends, Laura would pick up a load of trees from the KFS and head back home to work on the windbreak. She and Monte hand-dug the holes and placed the weed barrier fabric and trees. The hard work did not stop there. To make sure that the trees got established, they watered the young trees by hand, dipping a gallon can out of a large barrel. Eventually, the Lawrenz's invested in some irrigation line and emitters, which greatly aided in watering the trees. Depending on weather conditions, the trees would get watered about twice per week, giving them a very good survival rate; although as expected, some would need to be replaced.

Monte sites on-going maintenance as a necessary component in keeping a windbreak in good health. Whether it be mowing between the rows to keep weeds down to a minimum, or walking the length of the windbreak during irrigation to make sure that each tree is receiving adequate water, the Lawrenz's made quite an investment in this windbreak and want to keep it in the best shape possible.





Join Us For A Bloomin' Good Time at the 2010 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 a delicious lunch and a chance to relax a little, we head back out on the range for another gaze at nature's wonders.



Stiff Stem Flax

This year's tour is scheduled for May 8. The price of the tour is \$15 which includes a continental breakfast, lunch, an afternoon snack, and transportation to at least two sites. Be sure to check out our Wildflower Tour T-Shirts! We have two different designs available for purchase. Also check out our various books for sale on the wildflowers of Kansas.

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 is April 30, 2010. Applications are available at the conservation office, 800 W. 3rd Avenue, Medicine Lodge, Kansas. You may also call (620) 886-5311 ext. 3 for more information.

Cost Share Sign-Up

Applications for the FY 2011 Water Resources Cost-Share Program (WRCSP) and Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program (NPS) will be accepted April 1-30, 2010. Approved practices include waterway construction, grass seeding, pasture and hayland seeding, livestock water developments, ponds, terraces, pipe outlets, erosion control structures, and windbreaks. All applications will be ranked according to priority of the resource concern. Funding will become available July 1. Remember, all projects must be approved for funding prior to beginning. Applications for cost-share assistance through the Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program (NPS) will also be accepted during the April sign-up period. Approved practices for this program include repair of failed septic systems, abandoned water well plugging, and livestock waste management. As in all cost-share programs, a project must receive approval before it can be started.



Equipment Available for Use

12' Horizon Grass Drill	\$5/acre
	\$250 Deposit
15' Great Plains Drill	\$9/acre
	\$500 Deposit
Drip Torch	\$5/day
Water Backpack	\$5/day
Tree Spade	\$100/day
	\$250 Deposit
1-2 trees	\$50
Surrounding counties	\$75 surcharge

Survival rate for transplanted trees is best when trees are moved in any month with the letter "r" in it (fall is better than spring). Trees measuring 4" in diameter, a foot off the ground do very well. The tree spade is self contained, digging a hole 44" across and 36" deep. Best pulled with a 3/4 ton pickup, then use a small tractor to maneuver around the tree.

CALL DIG SAFE!!!

Products For Sale

Grass Seed - The Barber County Conservation District is a licensed seed dealer. Contact us for all your grass seeding needs.

Pipe — We stock a large inventory of corrugated plastic and metal pipe for all your drainage needs; terrace pipe outlets, ponds, culverts, and drainage around the house.

19 Strand Lite Cable — for electric fencing. Non-slinky effect makes for easy installation and moving. Fencing posts, clips, joint clamps, gate springs, and other fencing supplies also available.

What Is It, A Wildflower, A Forb or A Weed? by Carl Jarboe

One question often precludes another and this is one of those. The answer is; it depends on who you are. The same plant can be all three and often is. It really just depends on where the plant is and who sees it first.

If you are fortunate to have an opportunity to take a walk in a pasture this spring you are likely to see many different wildflowers in full bloom, that is if you are from town or live in a city. To the local rancher the very same plant may represent a weed; it is replacing or at least competing with native grass species that he sees as necessary to keep his livestock gaining weight. The range management specialist will see the same plant as a forb. A needed part of the natural plant community, providing a flower for our insect pollinators, beauty for the casual passerby and at the same time providing nutrition to livestock or simply holding the soil in place preventing erosion.

Catchlaw Sensitive Briar, Prairie Clover, Cobea Penstemon and Bush Morning-glory are just a few of the nutritious forbs commonly found in well managed pasture land. Livestock love these plants and seek them out. Over grazing can eliminate them from the range site. When management is changed and they have a chance, they will return.

Take time to attend the Wildflower Tour this May sponsored by the Barber County Conservation District. You will have an opportunity to see and identify many wildflowers, forbs and weeds. You can decide which category fits.



Cobea Penstemon





Soil Compaction

by Steven P. Graber, Resource Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Dodge City, Kansas

Soil compaction occurs on nearly every farm in the United States. The results of compaction can be evident in crop growth. Careful thought should be given to planning your tillage operations. Just how many passes will be needed to prepare your seedbed? The trend has been toward reduced, or no tillage, mainly due to the cost of fuel. However, there is something else besides fuel savings. Every trip across the field compacts the soil forming zones where crop growth is impaired.

Soil compaction can manifest itself in a couple of different forms. Compaction caused by the wheel traffic and compaction from the tillage implement itself. Research has shown that the first pass of the tractor causes the most soil compaction. This is without a doubt the major cause of soil compaction.

The weight of tractors has increased from less than 3 tons in the 1940s to approximately 20 tons today for the big four-wheel-drive tractors. This is of special concern because spring planting is often done before the soil is dry enough to support the heavy planting equipment. Greater axle loads and wet soil conditions increase the depth of compaction in the soil profile. Compaction caused by heavy axle loads (greater than ten tons per axle) on wet soils can extend to depths of two feet or more. Continuous sweep plowing or disking at the same depth year after year will cause serious tillage pans just below the depth of tillage in most soils. The tillage pan is generally relatively thin (two to four inches thick), and can have a significant effect on crop production. This can be alleviated by varying depth of tillage over time or by special tillage operations.

Compaction causes reduced yields and may worsen other problems that reduce yields such as disease and low nutrient supply because of reduced root distribution. Assessment of the severity of compaction problems is best done by inspection of the soil and crop roots. If root growth is restricted due to compaction, deep tillage such as subsoiling may be warranted.

The depth of yield-limiting soil compaction will determine the required depth of tillage and tillage tool selection. If compaction occurs in the top six to eight inches of the soil, tillage tools such as a chisel plow can be used to shatter the compacted layer. However, if compaction is below eight to ten inches, tillage tools such as a subsoiler, ripper, or paraplow may be needed. The key is to operate the tillage tool no deeper than necessary, one to two inches below the bottom of the tillage pan. Also, the soil needs to be dry in order for the operation to shatter the tillage pan.

The alleviation of the compacted soil is not easy. Although subsoiling or chiseling can alleviate compaction immediately, the second pass by a single vehicle or implement may nullify the effort. The use of different strategies will be the best shot at solving the problem. Reducing tillage, increasing organic matter, controlling traffic, and if necessary, subsoiling will all benefit the soil improving soil quality and increasing crop production.

You might think that one pass across the field will not hurt much, but that one pass with the wrong soil conditions may be one too many. Be careful and think, is this tillage pass really necessary? If you plan your tillage operations and stay out of the field as much as possible, you will save fuel and your crops might just produce better yields.

For more information about soil conditions, please contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office or conservation district office located at your local county USDA Service Center.

For more information about NRCS programs, visit the Kansas NRCS Web site at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov.





Celebrating 60 Years of the Barber County Conservation District

A petition signed by more than 290 Barber County land occupiers was filed on March 7, 1949 with the State Soil Conservation Committee requesting the establishment of the Barber County Soil Conservation District. A public hearing was held at the District Court House on March 28, 1949 to determine the “desirability and necessity in the interest of the public health, safety and welfare of the creation of such district”. Of the 459 votes cast, a favorable tabulation of 404 votes for the creation of the district was recorded. The State Soil Conservation Commission appointed the district’s first two supervisors on May 3, 1949, followed by a county wide election on July 2, 1949, in which eligible voters elected the remaining three supervisors.

Since it’s establishment in 1949, the Conservation efforts in Barber County have helped in the planting of over 54,000 acres of Pasture and Rangeland Planting, over 2,800 acres of Grassed Waterways, and over 655,000 feet of Diversions.

A complete list of totals for Barber County is listed in our 60 Years booklet that was available at our Annual Meeting. The booklet also contains highlights from all sixty years. We still have a few booklets left so if you didn’t get one, feel free to come in and pick one up.

Upcoming Events

The Barber County Conservation District would like to make you aware of a few upcoming events this year and make a special announcement regarding reduced tillage. The Conservation District has recently purchased a new Great Plains native grass drill, which will also be capable of no-till drilling. We expect to take delivery of this 15-foot drill in early March. If you have been thinking about trying no-till on some small acreages on your farm without going to the expense of purchasing a new drill for yourself, contact the Conservation Office to rent ours. This would be a great opportunity to see for yourself how much residue you can successfully seed into, and the benefits of no-till farming.

Also, Barber and Comanche counties will host two no-till educational events sponsored by the South Central Kansas Residue Alliance Chapter. The first event will be a day-long workshop located in Protection, KS on March 18th. Keynote speakers will be Dr. Ray Ward (president of Ward Laboratories), and Paul Jasa (Extension Engineer at the University of Nebraska). There will also be presenters from NRCS doing soil quality demonstrations, followed by a question-and-answer session with area producers. Light refreshments and a lunch will be provided, so RSVP’s are requested by March 11th to the Conservation District.

The second event will be a farm-tour highlighting the successes and challenges of no-till in south-central Kansas, and will take place in Barber County sometime in August. More information will follow regarding this event. We encourage you to take part in one or both events as the information provided will be invaluable, and you will have the opportunity to see no-till in action here on our “home turf.”

BARBER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
800 W. THIRD AVE.
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www.ctic.purdue.edu/CTIC/CTIC.html

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.

Barber County Conservation District
Board of Supervisors

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Member Georgi Dawson
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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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