

Conservation Conversation

www.barbercountyconservationdistrict.com

In an effort to try and reach the producers of the county and provide another source of information, the Conservation District has created a website which is now available. Our website has information about the different programs offered by both the Conservation District and NRCS, as well as links to applications for these programs. Links to other organization's websites such as NRCS, the Kansas NRCS site, FSA, Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks, CoCoRaHS weather reporting, and others are also available by visiting our site.

Information is available on the different items for sale (pipe and components, fencing materials, grass seed, and flags) and our equipment for rent (grass drills, tree spade, drip torches, and water backpacks). Also available online is a list of contractors who do conservation work in Barber County. The list includes anyone who has requested to be on our list and we do not refer one contractor over another.

Included on the website is a guide to all of our Youth & Education activities. These include, among other things, our stewardship materials available to churches and educators, information on the stream-flow trailer, the poster contest, and various scholarships available from the District. The Wildflower Tour is one of the District's major educational events. Information available about the tour include dates, times, pictures from previous tours, and a reservation form.

We will also be posting all of the major articles and important dates included in our quarterly newsletter along with any new information as it becomes available. If there is any information that you would like to see on our website, please let us know and we will try to get it posted.

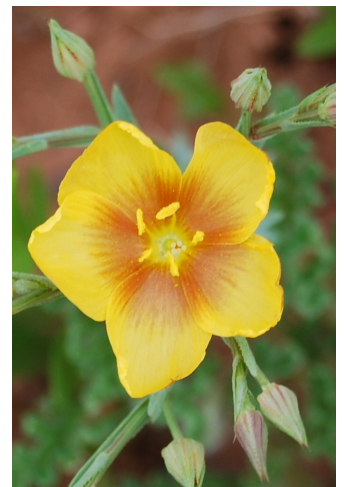
www.barbercountyconservationdistrict.com

Wildflower Tour

The weather was perfect on May 9th as we welcomed 100 enthusiastic Wildflower Tour guests ready to experience the splendor Barber County has to offer. A cool, overcast morning gave way to a warm, sunny afternoon allowing our wildflower enthusiasts to experience different stages of the flowers in bloom. Experienced, knowledgeable tour guides shared their knowledge of the flowers, including some little-known uses for many of the plants.

Following a delicious lunch at Eagle Park, guest speaker, Sam Baier spoke to the group about the fire that swept across his land last August and the dazzling effects the land beheld this spring. Whether it was studying the spectacular display of wildflowers, or climbing the hills to see them from afar, everyone had their favorite part and went home delighted.

This highly anticipated event is a great way to introduce folks to the wonder of wildflowers and share the beauty of our little corner of the world, Barber County.



Proposed SCC/KDA Consolidation Fails

Note: The following article was reprinted from the KACD Connection, the Newsletter of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, May 2009.

The 2009 Kansas Legislature conducted hearings but took no action on a proposal to merge the State Conservation Commission and the Animal Health Department with the Kansas Department of Agriculture. The legislation, Senate Bill 231, resulted from a performance audit by the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit late in 2008 that estimated potential cost savings of \$710,000 annually with the consolidation.

KACD and representatives from conservation and watershed districts statewide were instrumental in the defeat of this legislation by expressing key concerns to lawmakers and informing the public through media releases. "The consolidation posed a significant risk to conservation districts, both in the level of technical assistance provided to them as well as future funding impacts," said KACD Executive Director Pat Lehman. He cited major concerns over reducing the voice of locally elected conservation district supervisors and a reduction in conservation program dollars that may have become low priority for future administrations in the Department of Agriculture.

The responsiveness of SCC to specific concerns raised by legislators was particularly crucial to the defeat of the bill. The agency conducted a rigorous review of its budget to identify areas that could be cut, yielding cost savings nearly equivalent to the amount suggested by the performance audit. "We trimmed the budget to the bone," said SCC Executive Director Greg Foley. "Some of the cuts are painful - especially the elimination of staff positions." Another area that saw major cuts was in the cooperative agreement between SCC and NRCS. The hiring of personnel to provide technical assistance in the field was reduced from eight authorized to zero.

Lehman pointed out that 2009 is the first year of the current two-year legislative cycle. That means that Senate Bill 231 remains in committee for possible consideration next year.

"The response by conservation district supervisors and employees to this potentially detrimental legislation demonstrates the effectiveness of grassroots advocacy," said Lehman. "It also highlights the importance of maintaining strong partnerships if we're to preserve the conservation structure that has served Kansas well for more than seventy years."

"The consolidation posed a significant risk to conservation districts, both in the level of technical assistance provided to them as well as future funding impacts."

Looking Ahead

By Jarred Kneisel

Spring 2009 was not what you'd call a typical Kansas spring. Yes, the wind did blow (a given), but things were much cooler and wetter than normal. While that meant good things for the wheat around the county, it did present some challenges for those who wanted to do a prescribed burn to help improve the condition of their grass or control brush. Only a handful of days this spring had ideal conditions to conduct a prescribed burn, and on those days the horizon was dotted with plumes of smoke. By the time the weather began to turn warm and drier, the native grasses were already too far along to conduct a successful burn, leaving many producers writing this year off and hoping to get that burn in next year.

In many ways, this can be a blessing in disguise. A prescribed burn is not something that should be thought about a week or two before lighting the first match anyways, but rather a tool that should be worked towards and planned at least the year prior. So if you are planning on doing a burn this next spring, there is plenty to think about and work on to ensure that the burn will be as successful as possible. For one, a key ingredient to any fire is fuel. How much and what type of fuel available will dictate a lot about the fire's behavior, and whether or not you will achieve your burning goal. Will you need to adjust your stocking rates to allow for adequate fuel to be built up? Another point to think about is what you will use to control the fire once it is lit. Will you need to mow fire-breaks? If so, then it may be best to do that now and let the cattle keep them maintained by grazing the re-growth, saving you a lot of work later on in the fall or winter. You may also need time to get your equipment mended and ready for service, or start bartering with your neighbors to get some volunteer help lined up!

If you need any information, or resources like maps printed out that would help, feel free to stop by the office and we'd be glad to help.

Expiring CRP Options

By Jarred Kneisel, SDC

In the next three years, nearly ten thousand acres in Barber County alone will expire from the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), with another six thousand acres after that. If you are reluctant to convert any or all of your expiring acres back to cultivated ground, you do have options. For one, you could leave the area in grass and either hay or graze it. Or, you could take advantage of a different branch of CRP.

While a new general CRP sign-up has not been announced, Continuous CRP (CCRP) is available, as the name implies, on an on-going basis. Many of you are familiar with some of the practices available through CCRP. Filter strips along creeks and streams, field borders or small "bird-buffers" along the edges of crop-fields, and windbreaks or shelterbelts are just a few of the common CCRP practices installed. These practices, as well as others available through CCRP, can be combined and tailored to best fit your farm and your goals. For example, take a look at your field(s) and determine if all areas need (or should) be cultivated. If there were areas present where in the past it was difficult to raise a good crop because of the trees hanging over the fence-row competing with the crops for nutrients and sunlight, you could enroll a bird buffer to get out from under the trees, while still receiving payment on that strip. Or, if you had been farming right up to the creek bank and were constantly losing crop-ground to the eroding bank, you could enroll a filter strip. Maybe there are areas that were just too wet and you were only able to harvest a crop once every five years or so – enroll for a farmable wetland and buffer. Or maybe more commonly, there's always that odd-ball or crooked area of the field that is just too much of a hassle to get back to and plant, you might think about leaving those areas in native grass and receiving CRP payments as well. Not only does this reduce your financial risk for that field (and maybe even increases the profits from that field), but also helps to protect against water and wind erosion, while at the same time providing some critical wildlife habitat.

Continuous CRP works in a similar manner as regular CRP. Participants receive a rental payment based upon what types of soils are present, cost-share is available on seeding or improving the grass stand, and a maintenance item (depending on what practice is chosen) must be implemented within the life of the contract. Contracts can range between 10 and 15 years (also depending on the practice). One benefit of having expiring CRP is that enrolling into CCRP will be a very simple process, if you act quickly. If you were to enroll into CCRP within six months of the expiration of your general CRP contract, you will be accepted into the program noncompetitively as long as acres are still available within the state. This is a tremendous plus, and there may be essentially no interruption in payments on those acres. And, since your grass has already been well-established, you won't have to go through the planting of new grass like in other contracts. If you are interested in CCRP or have any questions about the program, I would encourage you to stop by the USDA Service Center and either speak with myself or FSA in order to see how you could maximize the benefits available through CCRP on your farm, and to do so in a timely manner so that once your general CRP contract goes off of the books, your Continuous CRP contract picks right up.

Non-Point Source Funds Available

The proper function of a septic system is to treat and disperse sewage in a safe, sanitary manner. Your on-site wastewater system is failing if sewage drains are sluggish, sewage is backing up into the home, you notice a wet, smelly spot in your yard, or your septic system discharges at the surface such as into a road ditch, draw, or stream. If any of these occurrences are an issue with your septic system, repair of your system is imminent. Cost-share funds to assist in the repair of systems at least ten years old will be available through Kansas' Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program (NPS) effective July 1.

To apply for these funds, an assessment must first be made by the county sanitarian to determine system failure and to design the new system according to local sanitary code. The application will be submitted to the State Conservation Commission, and upon approval, the system can be replaced with cost-share funds up to \$3500.

Stop by the conservation office for information on more eligible practices through the NPS Program.



**Come Join
Us
At The
Fair!**

Be sure to stop by the Conservation District's Booth at the Barber County Fair in Hardtner, Kansas, July 24-25.

Displays, conservation programs information, give-aways, and door prize drawings for kids and adults.

EVENT BINS

The Conservation District will be placing event recycling bins around the fair grounds again this year. Please help us by placing your recyclable bottles and cans in the bins.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

Be watching the newspapers in August, there may be information announcing a new Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up.

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

Return Service Requested

PRSR STD
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/ksc
www.swcs.org
www.unl.edu/nac
www.nascanet.org
www.nrcs.usda.gov
www.RCDnet.org
www.nacdnet.org
www.cocorahs.org
www.fsa.usda.gov
www.ctic.purdue.edu/CTIC/CTIC.html

Barber County Conservation District
Board of Supervisors

Chairman Calvin Boyd
Vice Chairman..... Matt Cantrell
Treasurer Ted Alexander
Member Sam Baier
Member Georgi Dawson

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.

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.

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.