



Conservation Conversation

2017 Anderson Creek Wildfire Initiative

State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Eric Banks, will make an announcement at the Conservation District Annual Meeting regarding a special funding initiative for landowners in Barber and Comanche Counties whose land was affected by the Anderson Creek Wildfire. This multi-year initiative “will provide financial and technical assistance to producers to address degraded plant condition and wildlife habitat needs on rangeland in the wildfire affected area.”

While still in the developmental stage, specific conservation practices have been approved:

- Prescribed Burning Plan
- Brush Management
- Herbaceous Weed Control
- Prescribed Burning
- Woody Residue Treatment
- Firebreak
- *Access Control*
- Prescribed Grazing

*Plan to attend our annual meeting on January 14, 2017
for the official announcement and for more details.*

Conservation District To Hold Annual Meeting

The 67th Annual Meeting of the Barber County Conservation District will be held January 14, 2017 at the Heritage Center in Medicine Lodge at 6:00 P.M. Dinner is provided by the banks in Barber County. United States Senator Jerry Moran has made tentative plans to attend, as well as NRCS State Conservationist, Eric Banks, who will be making an announcement regarding the 2017 Anderson Creek Wildfire Initiative.

The business session will include the district’s financial report for 2016 as well as highlights of events and activities throughout the year. There will also be an election of two supervisors to the district board. Matt Cantrell and Ted Alexander hold the expiring positions, and have agreed to run for additional three-year terms.

Presentations of the Bankers Award Winners will be given to two landowners for their accomplishments and efforts in performing and maintaining conservation practices on their land. A Grasslands Award will also be presented for improvement to and maintenance of native grassland. The top three conservation poster contest winners in five categories will receive recognition for their posters which will be on display.

Reservations can be made by contacting the conservation office at (620) 886-5311 by January 9, 2017. Hope to see you there!

Winter Care for Windbreaks and Other Landscaping is Important!

As we have now experienced our first blast of cold air it may be a little late for some of this advice. If the weather moderates some you may have an opportunity to accomplish some of these tasks.

Windbreaks, particularly newly planted, need watered well before we have frost in the ground. All evergreen plants including broadleaf can suffer if going into winter dry. Water these plants well before the ground freezes. It's a little hard to think about frozen soil right now but it may happen. Mulching is a good way to help keep moisture in the soil. Remember to keep the mulch away from the trunks of the trees and shrubs so mice and moles can't chew on them without being seen by predators. Mulch will also protect the young plants from frost heave that happens when you have several freeze thaw cycles in the winter.

When the soil freezes plants can no longer pull the moisture out that they need . This contributes to a problem called sunscald. Basically it's sun burn on evergreen plants. There are products that you can spray on evergreens to help prevent moisture loss; they are anti-desiccants and work like sunblock. The products are available at nursery and garden centers, however you may find them at a local hardware store as well. Be sure to follow the label for application rates and proper application conditions .

Deciduous plants can also suffer from sunscald. Young shade and ornamental trees can have their bark burned from winter sun heating up the south and west sides on bright sunny days to a much higher temperature than the north or east sides. This can cause the bark to split and pull away from the trunk. Bore insects will be ready to take advantage of the cracks and crevices to lay eggs where their larva can hatch and start eating away at the cambium layer. They can kill a young tree. Wrapping the trunk with tree wrap from the ground to the lower branches can protect the trunks of young trees from sun scald and rabbits that might try to eat on the young bark. Tree wrap needs to be removed by April 1 to prevent bore beetles from getting in behind it. Wrap trees until the bark is mature enough that it is rough or heavily textured in appearance. Usually it takes 3 to 5 years for a young tree to develop rough bark.

Rabbits may also attack and consume your evergreen trees in your windbreak. A product called rabbit repellent or another called liquid fence are just a few that might help prevent deer, rabbits and other rodents from working on your young trees in the windbreak or home landscape. Rabbits will eat on most anything when snow is covering the ground so protect all young plants if you can.

So, here you go - water well, mulch to help hold moisture and protect from freeze/thaw cycles, protect young evergreens with an anti-desiccant, young deciduous trees with tree wrap and spray a repellent to protect all plants from wildlife feeding damage.

A little work now following some of these tips may protect the windbreak so you are not replanting next spring.

Poster Contest Winners



Each year the Conservation District provides poster paper to students K-12 in Barber County to participate in the National Association of Conservation Districts annual poster contest. A total of 200 students turned in posters this year, sharing their thoughts on the theme "We All Need Trees". The top three winners in each age division are:

K-1

Rebekah Etheridge—1st
Erick Hernandez—2nd

2-3

Shaefer Stone—1st
Maddie Cunningham—2nd
Claire Cunningham—3rd

4-6

Laylah Gleason—1st
Jhayla Alojacin—2nd

7-9

Corbin Smith—1st
Kaleigh Schaefer—2nd
Lucas Doornbos—3rd

10-12

Kelsey Kelter—1st
Troy Smith—2nd
Brooklyn Hernandez—3rd

USDA Announces Applications Available for Updated Conservation Stewardship Program

Since November 14, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been accepting applications for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Based on feedback from farmers, ranchers, and forestry landowners, CSP has been updated with more options to get increased payments based on new bundles of conservation practices. Also, new modeling tools have been created to show payment scenarios for various conservation practices early in the application process. Landowners still have time to submit their applications for the program.

NRCS is taking CSP applications until February 3, 2017. Information about CSP, including national and state ranking questions and enhancement descriptions, is available on the Web at www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp. Applications and program information are available in local service centers.

With over 70 million acres enrolled, CSP is the nation's largest conservation program. It pays agricultural producers and forest landowners for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat—all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land.

According to Eric B. Banks, Kansas state conservationist, "This is a big deal. The CSP changes now offer greater rewards for producers who put more conservation practice on the ground." And in speaking about the preparation for the program's new features, Eric said, "Beside new software tools to run payment scenarios early in the application process, CSP has been redesigned to look more like other conservation programs that are familiar to farmers and ranchers. Plus, all new program information has been developed to view or download on the Web so that landowners can see all the options available for them

For more information, visit the Kansas NRCS Web site www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs or your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. To find a service center near you, check on the Internet at offices.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Applications are now being accepted for the John Farney Memorial Scholarship, a \$1000 scholarship awarded annually to a student entering at least his/her second year of college. Applicants must be a resident of Barber County and be pursuing a degree in a conservation related field. Applications are available at the conservation office. Deadline is March 15, 2017.