



# Conservation Conversation

Official Newsletter of the Barber County Conservation District

Volume 28, Issue 2

## SPRING SHOWERS BROUGHT MAY FLOWERS

On Saturday, May 9, forty-eight guests gathered on native rangeland of Barber County to see an abundant display of native wildflowers. Coaxed into fresh bloom by recent rain showers and sunshine, tour-goers were not disappointed with this year's display for the Spring Wildflower Tour.

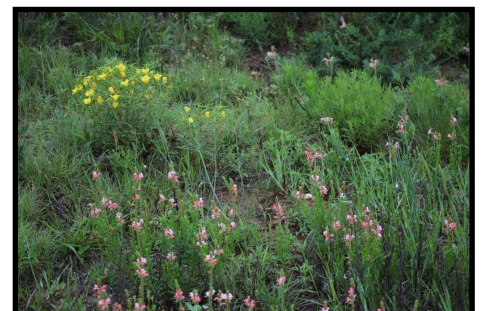
Two morning sites and an afternoon site were planned; however, rain began to fall just as the guides were finishing up on the second morning site. Anticipating that the tour would be interrupted by rain, the group was re-routed from lunch at Eagle Park to the high school cafeteria for a hearty barbeque lunch and good conversation among like-minded wildflower enthusiasts.

As radar indicated more rain on the way, the decision was made to abandon the afternoon tour. None were too disappointed as the day to that point had been such a pleasant experience. To complete their time in Medicine Lodge, they were encouraged to visit the downtown area and especially the Stockade Museum and Carrie Nation Home, which some did.

A big 'thank you' to this year's tour guides; Harold Kline, Carl Jarboe, Jess Crockford, and Calla Jarboe. With a wealth of experience and knowledge supporting the uniqueness of Barber County, they were as always, the major contribution to the success of our tour.



*Calla Jarboe guides her group along the tour.*



## Conservation Field Day

North Barber 5th and 6th graders enjoyed an afternoon out of the classroom on April 17, for a conservation education day. (South Barber 5th & 6th graders had their day last fall.) Although the entire day was planned to be held on the Z Bar Ranch, muddy roads changed those plans.

Wildlife presentations by Charlie Swank, Ken Brunson, and Eva Yearout held the kids' attention while Jerry McNamar demonstrated his ground water flow model. Carl Jarboe finished with a soils profile display followed by treating the kids to their own soils profile cup.

The Conservation District is committed to teaching kids about the importance of conserving our natural resources, and encouraging their own personal stewardship of those resources. Our appreciation and thanks go out to Mrs. Buck, Mrs. Hanna, Mrs. Hrencher, Mrs. Boyce, and Mr. Cunningham for allowing us to be an important part of our kids' education.



## Range Youth Camp Scholarship

Range Youth Camp is the most accepted and enduring activity of the Kansas Section of the Society for Range Management. The camp was first held in 1960 and is continuing to educate youth about the importance of Kansas rangelands to this day. 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.

Upcoming High School Sophomore, Junior, and Senior students who have a serious interest in rangeland management, rangeland ecology, or grazing animals are eligible for a scholarship through the Barber County Conservation District to attend the camp June 29-July 2, 2015 at Camp Mennoscah in Murdock, KS. Applications are due to the Conservation Office by June 15. Contact us at 620-886-5311 for information.



## Summer Burning by Jess Crockford, Kansas Prescribed Fire Council

It might sound like a crazy idea but prescribed burning during the summer months just might work. According to research, burning during the summer months is just as, if not more effective than the traditional spring time burns. This spring has been a tough time to carry out a burn because of all the high winds and erratic wind shifts. If you missed out on your burn due to weather conditions you may want to consider a summer burn.

Most ranchers understand that traditionally prescribed burning is done in the spring. Summer time burning was not considered because it did not seem to benefit the grass. They were taught that a summer burn would kill the grass, it could become a raging inferno or it would not achieve the desired objectives. Not true. Historically, the Great Plains burned anytime of the year! The Great Plains was and is a grassland ecosystem because of fire. It burned when the conditions were right, fuel was present and an ignition source was applied. You can burn any month of the year, in fact, July and August are actually some of the better months to burn. The burning conditions are more conducive and there are more favorable days to potentially apply and complete a burn. Weather patterns and conditions tend to be more stable during these months.



Drone shot by Brian Alexander

There are safety issues to consider as well with summer burns. Burning during the growing season is often easier and safer than spring burns. The flame length of the fire is decreased and the rate of spread is reduced. Summer fires are not necessarily hotter than spring burns but produce a much longer duration of heat. The longer period of high temperature helps to control unwanted species that are susceptible to fire. Most land management goals and objectives can be achieved with summer burns.

Fire is an important element of the Great Plains grassland environment that was significantly stifled after European settlement. Prescribed burns safely mimic the natural fire cycle and maintain a fire-resistant landscape. It is important that modern day ranches reintroduce fire into the ecosystem in a safe and economical way wherever feasible. Fire is Mother Nature's way of maintaining a healthy ecosystem on the Great Plains.

Native plant communities evolved with fires occurring during any season of the year and these burns did not damage or kill most native plants. Learning how to use fire during various seasons of the year can increase a land manager's options and their ability to achieve their goals and objectives.

If you are interested in learning more about prescribed fire, burn associations, or getting assistance in developing a prescribed burn plan, contact your local Conservation District or Natural Resources Conservation Service office at (620) 886-531 or the Kansas Prescribed Fire Council at (785) 532-3316.



**Come join members of the Gyp Hills Burn Association as they tour and review the prescribed burns that they implemented this past spring. Date and time to be determined (probably in August).**

**Watch for notices on our web-site at [www.barbercountyconservationdistrict](http://www.barbercountyconservationdistrict) on Facebook, and in The Kiowa News and Gyp Hill Premiere.**

# Summer Range School Scholarship Available

*"Sustaining Rangelands by Leaving A Legacy"* is the theme for the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition (KGLC) summer range schools. The Barber County Conservation District is offering a scholarship to the Mid-/Shortgrass Range School which runs from August 4-6 at Camp Lakeside, Lake Scott, and at The Nature Conservancy Smoky Valley Ranch.

The notion of leaving your ranch better than you got it—economically and environmentally; recognizing those who have done a great job over time; addressing current and emerging threats like old world bluestems, Eastern red cedar, and other invasive species, plus a host of practices and systems to enhance grasslands will be included in the three-day agenda. Instructors include ranchers, agency, university and organizational staffs who provide hands-on instruction in the field as well as classroom presentation with the intent to help inform decision makers and provide them with sound grazing principles that they can take home and employ within their operations.



The 2015 registration fee has seen a slight jump to \$350 per person; the first increase since 2010. The fee covers course materials, on-site lodging and meals, and other related costs. Ranchers, landowners, and students may also qualify for a \$175 scholarship through KGLC if they meet eligibility and request one using KGLC's scholarship form found at [www.kglc.org](http://www.kglc.org) under 2015 Range Schools found in the navigation bar. Scholarship applications must be submitted by July 24 for the Mid/Shortgrass School.

Contact the Conservation Office before July 24 to apply for their scholarship offer as well.

## COME TO THE FAIR!

"Barber County Cheers for 95 Years: Sew It, Grow It, Show It" is the theme for the Barber County Fair July 23-26. Make plans now to come out in support of the Barber County youth and their 4-H Clubs, and share in their pride as they exhibit all the hard work they've put in this past year. Enter an exhibit of your own, enjoy the rodeo, pedal tractor pull, carnival, great food and entertainment. Slow down long enough to catch up with neighbors in the kitchen, and savor the experience of your county fair.

Be sure to stop by the Merchants Building and give us a shout out at the Conservation District booth while treating your sweet tooth to some cotton candy.

## BY THE WAY...

- The Conservation District carries a large inventory of high density polyethylene (HDPE) corrugated pipe and components for all your drainage needs. Let us be your one-stop shop for your next project; tile outlets, culverts, ponds.
- We also carry New Zealand lite cable, SunGuard fiberglass posts, metal clips, and lots of other components for cross fencing. Producers love the 19-strand lite cable for its' "no-slinky" characteristics.
- If you are installing a livestock tank through cost-share, chances are you will be required to install a "bat-ramp" - we have'em!
- As a registered seed dealer, the Conservation District would be happy to fill your orders for native grass seed, cover crop mixes, cool season grasses and much more.

# Isn't Rain Wonderful!

By Carl Jarboe

What a change in a year! Last May the pastures were brown; Barber County looked like it was 3 months off on the calendar. An August appearance in May had all farmers and ranchers thinking about drought. What crops to plant and what stocking rate could my grass stand, if any cattle at all. Ponds were dry or just mud holes, water wells were going dry or only pumping part of the time. Would we have livestock water for the summer?

One year later it's a different scene. Grass is green, too wet to plant crops in May and ponds have some water in them. Springs are running again where they haven't for some time and water wells appear to have some recharge. What are your plans for summer? Have you made changes from last year already? I wanted to mention some considerations as we look at the upcoming season in relation to the last few years of drought.

## Crop ground

After several years of drought and little use for terraces and waterways we have found out how important they are after the recent rains. Have you checked yours out since the rain began to fall this spring? It might be a good time to take a look and note any problems you find. I've noticed several terraces have over-topped with the recent rain fall. After the next crop comes off some re-building should be accomplished to help reduce soil loss. Waterways may also have some issues due to large volumes of water going through them. Drive your waterways making note of any erosion in the bottoms. Maybe a cut has started somewhere, and pay attention to the areas where terraces come into the waterway. I have been on some lately that have large sediment pads just into the waterway. These high spots divert water and can concentrate it to the point that erosion gets started. Taking time to remove the excess sediment will go a long way in preserving the functionality of the waterway. Some re-seeding may be needed depending on how much soil is removed. Keeping cover on the ground to help reduce erosion is always important.

## Ponds

Many of you dug ponds out during the dry times. Did you get the dam and all disturbed areas re-seeded? If not you may be seeing some erosion caused by the recent rains. We are out of our optimum seeding window, however you could broadcast some old hay or feed on the area of concern to try and protect the soil. Planting a cover crop is also an option. Feed is commonly used except where you are grazing. You might try Teff grass as a cover and drill native in next winter. Cattle love it so you might need to hot wire the area off until it gets up and growing good.

## Pastures

What about stocking rates? Are you planning a big increase? I would like for you to consider that it could stop raining tomorrow. If it does, how long will your grass last? We don't know what the future has in store for us as far as temperatures and rain fall. Without that knowledge, to assume that we will have grass growing all summer is not a good bet. Allowing your grass to recover from several years of drought by keeping the stocking rates lower than you may have had in the good years will make a huge difference in your pasture's ability to recover. Growing extra forage is always better than not enough and it may give you that opportunity to burn next year. Let Mother Nature help you grow the fuel for your planned burn next year.

**BE SURE AND VISIT US ON THE WEB @  
WWW.BARBERCOUNTYCONSERVATIONDISTRICT.COM  
AND**

***LIKE US ON FACEBOOK FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION INCLUDING  
SCHOLARSHIPS, COST SHARE, AND EVENTS!***

### Barber County Conservation District Board of Supervisors

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

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.