

Water Currents

RILEY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Summer 2010

www.rileycountyconservationdistrict.org

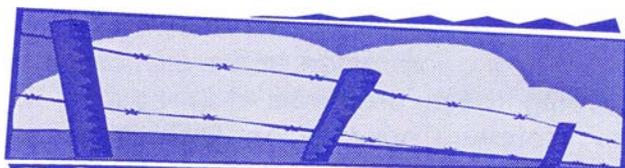
Volume 17, Issue 2

Sign Up in July for Cost Share Funds for Water Resources and Non-Point Source Pollution Control Practices

The State Conservation Commission (SCC) has adopted their FY 2011 budget and will soon allocate funds to the various county conservation districts to cost share on highest priority projects such as those listed below. **The Riley County Conservation District will accept applications from landowners for these cost share funds between July 6th and July 30th, 2010.**

The **Water Resources Cost Share Program** assists with:

- Terraces
- Grassed waterways
- Livestock ponds
- Livestock waste structures
- Critical area plantings
- Diversions
- Feedlot or field windbreaks
- Dry hydrants
- Riparian fencing (fencing livestock away from stream)
- Pasture and hay land planting
- Spring developments
- Establishing streamside buffers
- Livestock wells
- Wetland development or restoration
- Cross fencing



Water Resources projects are best discussed in person with Bob Lienemann. Please call Bob at (785) 537-8764 ext 5 to arrange a short meeting.

In the past, these contracts were often extended for another year or two, as requested. **Given the tight state budget, it will be important to have a definite schedule and a contractor lined up to complete the work quickly.**



The **Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program** funds assist with:

- On-site wastewater systems (repairing or replacing failed septic systems or lagoons - **these funds are only available for currently and continuously occupied homes** – not for empty homes nor for new home construction)
- Abandoned water well plugging
- Soil testing
- Livestock waste systems
- Riparian fencing (fencing livestock away from a stream)
- Livestock watering and pasture and rangeland management – which can include alternative water sources, cross fencing, native grass seeding and other practices

NPS projects are best discussed with Bob Lienemann at (785) 537-8764 ext 5, and a preliminary application may be completed by phone.

Only this one signup is planned for the fiscal year.

Applications for these cost share funds which are received by July 30th will be evaluated, scored and presented to the RCCD Board for approval. **It is anticipated that the first round of awards may be made in mid August, for construction beginning after the awards.**



Please note that cost share funds are not available for work which is started before approval by the SCC and before a signed contract is in hand. So please call and discuss your project before beginning any work.

Failing Septic Systems

Water Well Pump Advisory

Steve DeHart with the Riley County Health Department provided the following information recently.



“Last week a local rancher came into my office at the Riley County / Manhattan Health Department with a worried look on his face. He and his family had been drinking from the farm well for years. Then suddenly, three weeks ago, the water developed a terrible metallic taste. Testing at a local laboratory indicated the presence of a toxic PCB compound, *Aroclor 1016*. PCB’s, or Polychlorinated biphenyls, are a very stable, synthetic chemical which does not break down naturally in the environment. With a structure similar to pesticides, you definitely do not want this contaminant in your drinking well water.

Its use was banned by the EPA in 1976, but unfortunately it **can still be found in capacitors or lubricating oil of the older, two-wire submersible water well pumps manufactured before 1980.**” DeHart emphasized that this material is extremely toxic.

“Well water contamination occurs when a capacitor or a seal fails in the pump, allowing the PCB oil to leak into the well, where it can rise, coating the interior of the well casing, and mix with water when the pump starts its drawdown. This contaminated water comes in contact with the pump, pressure tank, whole house filter, hot water tank, water softener, the home’s plumbing, fixtures and you. Depending upon the leak, the contamination may not be apparent for years.”

“I would like to you please take some time and check your well. If you have a two-wire system with an older pump, contact your well driller. Prevent the contamination before it occurs.” You can reach **Steve at (785) 776-4779 ext 301** with questions or comments.

The Riley County Conservation District, through the Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program, provides cost-share to a limited number of Riley County landowners to repair or replace failing septic systems that are a considered a threat to water quality. Eligibility requirements must be met. The cost-share rate is **50%**, up to a **maximum payment of \$1,500**.

Plugging Abandoned Water Wells

Abandoned water wells - either hand dug or drilled - are a physical hazard to humans and animals, as well as a potential avenue for ground water contamination.



The plugging work can be done either by the landowner or by a licensed well driller, and the cost-share rate is **70%** of cost, up to a **maximum payment of \$500**.

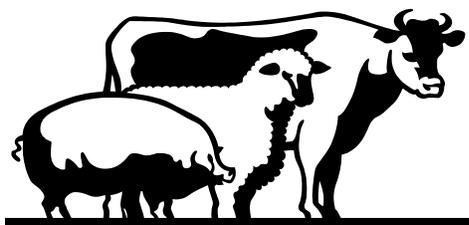
Cropland or Lawn & Garden Soil Testing



With the high cost of fertilizer, concerns for water quality and drinking water treatment costs, **you don’t want to apply any more nutrients than are necessary.** Soil testing is available through the Riley County Extension Office at 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan, at **70%** cost share, with a maximum of **10 tests per year per landowner for cropland, and 2 tests per year per landowner for lawn and garden** - until the limited cost share funds are expended.

Livestock Waste Systems

The RCCD may provide cost-share for livestock waste systems, and in certain cases the SCC may contribute additional funds, including design costs. EQIP funds may also be available for larger projects.

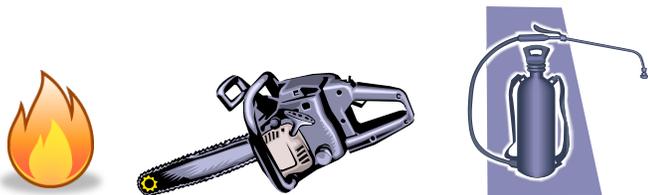


Funding provided by the State Conservation Commission through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund. All programs and services are provided to anyone regardless of race, gender, color, national origin, religion, age, marital status or handicap.



CRP - CP38 Program Added

A new CRP program for upland bird habitat allows entire fields smaller than 5 acres to be enrolled. If you are interested in **filter strips or bird and wildlife habitat improvements**, give us a call.



Ownership and Name Changes on Conservation Contracts

Please notify NRCS immediately in the event of selling land that is under an EQIP, GRP, or WHIP contract, **or if the land has been transferred to a trust, LLC, or partnership.** Many landowners are changing ownership designation by creating trusts. Contract transfer paperwork must be completed for any of these changes to avoid contract violations and payment delays.

Direct deposit banking information must also be updated. **Even if you notify FSA, you must also notify NRCS** of any of these changes. Thank you.

Attention EQIP Contract Holders

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract holders are encouraged to **certify practice completion** as soon as the practices are completed.

Grassland practices such as prescribed burning, chemical brush control, aerial spraying, fencing, and mechanical brush control **should be certified within 30 days of completion.** Prescribed Grazing and Rotational grazing practices **should be certified no later than December 1st** of each year. **Cropland practices** such as no-till, nutrient management, and pest management **should be certified by August 1st** of each year.



Timely certification of practices avoids unnecessary delays in payments due to contract modifications and extensions, and saves time for all involved. **Call (785) 776-7582 ext 3 and ask for Kevin Religa, NRCS District Conservationist.**

FSA Reminders

August 1st is the deadline to certify spring seeded crops, CRP, grass and alfalfa. **You must certify all cropland acres** on an annual basis with the Farm Service Agency. Please call the Riley/Geary FSA office at (785) 776-7582 to set an appointment. A late fee is charged for a field visit to verify crops after August 1st.

August 1st is also the **deadline for nominations** for the **FSA County Committee** election. Riley/Geary will have an opening for LAA #1, which is northern Riley County. Wendell Anderson has represented LAA#1 for the past 9 years, and is ineligible for re-election. If you would like to be on the ballot, or nominate someone to run for the FSA County Committee position, please call or stop by the FSA Office. Nomination forms are also available online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/>.



Erosion ca 1935 – photo by Arthur Rostein courtesy of USDA NRCS

NRCS celebrates 75 Years

During the 1930's, the Dust Bowl made the need to conserve natural resources - particularly soil - very clear. Agencies ranging from Land Grant Universities to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration researched and implemented conservation practices throughout the nation, and the **Soil Conservation Service (SCS)** was created within the U. S. Department of Agriculture in 1935. The agency's primary mission was to conserve soil on agricultural land. SCS became the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** in 1994, reflecting its expanded role in working with the natural resources of soil, water, air, plants, and animals.

“During these (past 75) years, the NRCS has led the nation in protecting our natural resources,” said Eric Banks, State Conservationist in Kansas. “We have followed the lead of the first chief of our agency, Hugh Hammond Bennett, who envisioned the agency’s soil conservationists to **work one on one with producers** on private and tribal lands and to walk the land **to develop a conservation plan.**”

“Programs and technology have provided many changes in delivering our services, but working with the producer / landowner and getting conservation on the ground remains NRCS’s number one priority,” said Banks. “That priority is reflected in our agency’s mission - ‘Helping People Help the Land’”.

Conservation practices carried out by farmers, ranchers, and other landowners in Kansas have improved the quality of life and built stronger rural communities. Agency statistics show dramatic improvements in Kansas’s natural resources because of conservation practices such as crop rotations, terraces, waterways, windbreaks, wetlands, no-till farming, buffers,

watershed dams, rangeland management, ponds, and nutrient and pest management, to name a few.

“The 75 years of success of NRCS can be attributed to dedicated producers, agency employees, local county conservation district board supervisors and staff, and partners, all of whom worked together to accomplish the goal of protecting our natural resources - soil, water, air, plants, and animals”, Banks continued. “This agency’s rich conservation legacy has resulted in many benefits to the state’s citizens - **abundant food and fiber, clean water, clean air, productive soils, and open spaces to use and enjoy.**”



Kansas Conservation Districts History

With the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1935, it was soon clear that local leadership was needed to coordinate efforts of conservation agencies, and to tie them into local conditions and priorities. The U. S. Congress developed a model Conservation Districts Law, for consideration by state governments. In 1937, Kansas’ State Conservation Committee was established by the Legislature with enactment of the Kansas Conservation Districts Law. **Riley County Conservation District (RCCD) was organized on June 10, 1948.** Conservation Districts are legal sub-divisions of state government that administer programs to conserve our natural resources (soil, water, air, plants and animals).

The governing body of a Conservation District consists of five elected district supervisors, who serve as grassroots representatives of landowners and the general public in their community, providing leadership and direction of voluntary cooperation in natural resource conservation programs. Supervisors of the Conservation District meet once a month to review the business of the office and make conservation decisions for the county, with technical advice from the USDA NRCS.

Together, NRCS and RCCD, working with other local, state and federal agencies, **form the conservation partnership for Riley County.** For more information about our various programs and activities, visit <http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov> or stop by your local USDA Service Center at 3705 Miller Parkway, Suite A, Manhattan, KS.



District's Conservation Farm

Our District received a **gift of an 80 acre farm** north of Manhattan, to promote conservation education. We've begun work by repairing a pond spillway, cutting cedars from the prairie, clearing trees along the county road that caused an ice problem in the winter, maintaining several small buildings on the site, and related work.

The property includes a small cabin and sheds, ponds, and mature and recently planted trees. **We cheerfully accept volunteers** to occasionally mow the area around the buildings, stain the cabin and deck, prune trees, maintain perimeter barbed wire fence, or related projects. This site also provides opportunities for 4-H, Scouts, FFA or other groups for individual or collective efforts. And we welcome your suggestions on how best to use the property into the future. For info or to volunteer your help, **call Bob at (785) 537-8764 ext 5.**



ENVIROTHON

Twenty five teams of 5 students plus their teachers / additional students took part in this year's **Area Envirothon**, held at Pott Co State Fishing Lake #2 on April 14th. The Envirothon program is for students in grades 9 -12, who conduct fieldwork, and then compete in the five subject areas of Wildlife, Forestry, Soils, Aquatics, and the Current Environmental Issue. Valley Heights High School won this year's area event.

Top teams from each county could then participate in the **statewide Envirothon competition**, which was held on

May 12th at Southwestern College in Winfield. Check with your school now, for next year's program!



Day on the Farm

Irene, Kevin, Nick and Bob, along with Riley County Farm Bureau, FFA and many other volunteers hosted the Day on the Farm for **all Riley County 3rd graders** on April 28th at CICO Park in Manhattan. **Over 500 students attended**, along with their teachers and assistants. The stream trailer was very popular, as it demonstrates practices that result in either good or bad water quality, both in town and on the farm, and also shows the impacts of stream erosion and sedimentation.

New CRP Options for Retiring and Beginning Farmers

"**Access to land** is one of the greatest challenges faced by new farmers", said Tamie Buckley of the Riley/Geary FSA office. The new **Transition Incentives Program (TIP)** in the 2008 Farm Bill encourages retiring owners or operators to transition their CRP land to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.

If all program requirements are met, TIP provides **annual rental payments** to the retiring farmer for **up to two additional years**, provided the transition is not to a family member. The beginning farmer can graze or crop the land, and a conservation plan must be set up with NRCS to ensure sustainable grazing or farming.

To be eligible, TIP requires that the retired or retiring farmer or rancher:

- Have land enrolled in CRP that is in the last year of the contract, or expired in 2008 or 2009.
- Allow the beginning / socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher to make conservation improvements.
- Agree to a sale or long-term lease (min 5 years) of the CRP land to a beginning / socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher by certain dates.

To **learn more about the TIP program**, contact the Riley/Geary FSA office, or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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Tom Roth,
Soil Conservationist
Nick Strawn,
Soil Conservation Technician
John Henry and Alex Miller,
Range Management Specialists

Riley County Conservation District Board meetings are generally held the second Thursday of each month - (May-October at 8:00 PM, and November-April at 7:30 PM). The public is welcome to attend – please call to verify time of meeting.

This newsletter is financed by a grant from the State Conservation Commission NPSP Control Fund and the State Water Plan Fund. All programs and services are provided to anyone regardless of race, gender, color, national origin, religion, age, marital status or handicap