

Douglas County Conservation District



Clean Water ~ Healthy Lands
Bright Future

Newsletter Quarter 2/2014
VOL.28 ISSUE 2



Protecting Douglas County
Natural Resources Since 1945

Events Calendar:

- April 2:** District Board Meeting
- April 5:** Kansas Rural Center's spring Tunnel to Table workshop
- April 7:** Spotted Wing Drosophila Workshop
- April 9:** Farm Bill Overview Meeting
- April 16:** Horse Care & Management
- April 19:** Lawrence Earth Day Events
- April 19:** The Grassland Heritage Foundation Native Plant Sale
- April 27 to May 4:** Stewardship Week
- April 29:** USDA Service Center Open House
- May 7:** District Board Meeting
- May 26:** Office Closed for Memorial Day
- June 2 & 3:** Tractor Safety Training
- June 4:** District Board Meeting
- June Date to be Determined:** Cover Crop "How To"

If you have any questions or would like to know more about an event, please call our office at 785.843.4260 Ext. 3. Keep posted with the most up to date information on our Facebook page!

Annual Meeting News

The 68th Annual Meeting of the Douglas County Conservation District was held on February 11, 2014 at the 4-H Fairgrounds in Lawrence, Kansas. One hundred and fifty seven people attended and enjoyed conversation, dinner and updates from the district, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The Kansas Association of Conservation District's Area 4 Speech Winner, Tristan Parks, gave a speech entitled "Soil to Spoon".

An election was conducted to fill the expiring terms of Mike Flory and Lee Whaley. Those running for office included Mike Flory, Lee Whaley and Karen Willey. Election results showed that Mike Flory and Karen Willey were both elected for a three-year term.

Key Banker, Michelle Jennings, representing Douglas County Bank presented the Kansas Bankers Conservation Awards to Larry and Eloise Craig, Mike, Julie and Dennis Craig for the Soil Conservation Award; Daniel and Rebecca Squires for the Water Quality Award; Washington Creek Lavender Farm owned by Jack and Kathy Wilson for the Energy Award; and Clyde and Marybeth Mermis for the Wildlife Habitat Award. Luke Ulrich, Board member, presented the Buffer Award to Wak-N-Duk, LLC represented by Larry and Susan McElwain; and to Gerald and Deb Powell for the Grassland Award.

Door prizes, donated by L&M Catering, Baldwin State Bank, Feyh Farm Seed, Baldwin Feed Co., Douglas County Bank, Washington Creek Lavender Farm, Jim Weaver, Shuck Implement, Heritage Tractor and McConnell Machinery were awarded.

Thank you to our sponsors Douglas County Bank, Feyh Farm Seed, Heine Excavating and Lone Pine Ag-Services for sponsorship of our Annual Meeting meal, program and continued support of conservation efforts in Douglas County.

We would like to thank the following businesses for their continued support of conservation efforts in Douglas County and for their donation to assist with the Lawrence Journal World Conservation Edition. Thank you to Baldwin Feed Co., Heritage Tractor, Kansas Insurance, Inc., McConnell Machinery, Shuck Implements, and Webb & Associates.

To provide leadership and assistance in promoting individual responsibility for the conservation of Douglas County natural resources.

~Update from the District ~

Welcome to our newest Board Supervisor, Karen Willey. Karen brings a great enthusiasm for farming and the role agriculture can play in caring for the land. With a B.A. in Environmental Science and a Ph.D. in Geography, both from the University of Kansas, Karen uses her own small farm as a testing ground for how farming choices impact soil health.

Karen was awarded a SARE Farmer/Rancher Grant in 2013 for a two-year study of soil respiration (soil microbial activity) as crop ground is transitioned from conventional tillage to no-till with cover crops and rotational grazing. Karen started raising British White cattle for grass-fed beef about five years ago and continues to grow her herd and her customer base. She also raises chickens and goats to supply milk, meat, and eggs for her family and her neighbors. Karen is married to Scott Eudaly and they have one daughter, Katherine, who is a Kindergartener at Raintree School in Lawrence.

Thank you to Lee Whaley for his dedicated service to the Douglas County Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Lee served on the Board from February 1996 to February 2013. We will thank Lee for his service at our Open House on April 29, 2014 at noon. Please join us to thank him.

The new positions for Board of Supervisors for 2014:

Steve Wilson, Chair
Luke Ulrich, Vice Chair
Mike Flory, Secretary
Karen Willey, Treasurer
Ron Reed, Member

Please mark your calendars! There will be an Open House at the USDA Service Center on April 29, 2014 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Stop by and see our new office space! Staff will be on hand to answer questions!

It's that time of year again!

We are gearing up for Cost-Share Applications!

After a long winter, I'm sure there are many projects on your to-do list, including thinking about if the State Cost-Share Program would help you with your projects. Sign-up will run May 1, 2014 through June 15, 2014.

The Division of Conservation (DOC) administers state cost-share programs through the Conservation District, which provide landowners financial assistance to implement approved conservation practices. Funding for the Water Resource Cost-Share program is provided by the DOC from the Kansas Water Fund.

All cost-share practices are required to be built to DOC approved standards and specifications are based primarily on USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide Standards and Specifications.

Call us to discuss how we can help you with your conservation practices!

There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country.

~Theodore Roosevelt

Getting Started with Cover Crops

By Tanya Allemang, District Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Oakley, Kansas

You have read all the articles on soil health and you know how important it is. You have decided you want to try and plant cover crops, but where do you go to get started? The best thing to have is a mentor or friend that you can bounce off ideas. Look around, there may be other like-minded people in your area that may be already experimenting with cover crops. They would be an excellent source of information and experiences. If you don't have anyone near you, you might be able to access the web and find others with whom to share experiences. Talk to your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office and conservation district, they may be aware of additional resources available to you.

You are determined to do this on your own, so what do you need to know? You first need to understand the four principles of building soil health.

1. Minimize disturbance of the soil; disturbing the soil destroys the home of the microbiology and the soil aggregates that you are trying to build.
2. Armor the soil. The soil needs to be covered as much as possible to protect it. The biology's home won't be very effective if you don't give it a roof.
3. Supply living roots for 10 months per year on average. The biology needs a constant diet for optimal health. A feast after harvest and a famine during fallow will not build a population very quickly.
4. Maximize crop diversity. Biodiversity is good. Biology needs to eat from the 4 food groups: warm-season grass, warm-season broadleaf, cool-season grass, and cool-season broadleaf. Make some of those broadleaves a legume for good measure.

Start with a small piece of ground that you can devote the management time to. If this is new to you, you can make mistakes, that is how you learn. I'll bet you didn't learn to walk without falling down a time or two. Leave a check or control strip in the field. That's how you can tell what you are learning. Keep that strip in the same place every year. Over a few years of cover crops versus the control strip you will be able to see where you are going. In addition, it will make a great field tour.

When should cover crops be planted? Any open field is an opportunity to plant cover crops. You will see the benefit as long as there is one month of possible growth before weather or the next crop requires termination.

What should I plant? That is a more complicated question that would need a longer article. In short, you want a multispecies mix with a minimum of at least five species with preference given to mixes with seven or more species. The reason is the different plants all have different levels and angles of leaves to maximize available sunlight and they have different root structures to maximize root growth. In addition there is a synergy between the plants that we don't yet understand, but they are collaborative and benefit from each other. You also want to have a clear objective in mind for the cover: when do you want to plant it, terminate it, termination method, and what crop will follow it. With answers to those questions the seed dealer can better assist you in developing a mix. (Continued)...

(Continued)...

What is a carbon to nitrogen (C:N) ratio and why is it important? Again that would take a longer article to get detailed, but in short the higher C plants are slower to decompose (such as cereal grain straw). Plants lower in C have a lower C:N ratio and therefore decompose rapidly (such as legume residue). When you are new in your system, the lower C:N ratio plants are good and can jump start the biology. Carbon is what drives the system. You need to have a high enough C:N ratio that you are leaving a good residue mat. As you progress in this system you will need more and more high carbon plants in order to have adequate residue coverage. You never want to have your residue decompose so quickly that it leaves bare soil.

What kind of drill do I need? Most people just use the wheat drill they already own. The mixes stay pretty well mixed in the box provided you don't drive a couple hundred miles over gravel roads before drilling. This may cause settling out of seed. Even if the field isn't exactly drilled uniformly it is not critical. Some plants may grow better in one area of the field than another. Use the seeding depth for the deepest seeded plant in the mix. The shallower seeding depth plants will be able to follow the root channel made by the deeper seeded plants.

When should I terminate it? Please refer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cover Crop Termination Guideline available at your local NRCS office, or by contacting your local Risk Management Agency office.

During dry years, some people have experienced slightly poorer yields following cover crops the first year, particularly when it is in a young no-till field (less than 10 years of established no-till). Similar to no-till, it takes a while for the system to build and the benefits to be realized. You have to realize this is a biological system and is affected by the environment. All exponential growth curves initially start slow and build from there. Anytime the moisture or temperature is not optimum, the growth of the biology is slowed or halted and will resume when the conditions are right. So improvements and growth will take longer in drought years and will take Western Kansas longer than Eastern Kansas due to precipitation. You just need to stick with it and be patient. The system will build upon itself.

Make planting and managing cover crops a priority. You can't expect first class results, if planting the cover is a second class priority, something you might do when everything else is done. Believe in it, because if you don't think it will work then you'll prove yourself correct. Give it as much opportunity for success as you can. Don't be afraid to do something radical. Graze it or plant two cover crops in a row. Dare to be different.

Check out the NRCS soil health webpage at soils.usda.gov/sqi/. Stop by your local NRCS office or conservation district office located at your local county USDA Service Center (listed in the telephone book under United State Government or on the internet at offices.usda.gov). More information is also available on the Kansas Web Site at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Douglas County Conservation District will be presenting a Cover Crop Workshop in June 2014. We will send out an email notification if you are signed up for our E-Newsletter. Also watch for details on our Facebook page!

Education Activity Highlights!

We offer conservation education programs to schools in our county. This program emphasizes the importance of soil and water conservation. Some of the most recent events that we have provided include:

- **Slice of Ag:** We did the popular Soil and Water Jeopardy game and saw 900 Douglas County fourth grade students.
- **Eagles Day:** 1,200 people attended the 14th annual event hosted by the Clinton Lake Corps of Engineers and the Jayhawk Audubon Society. We did a seed matching game with the children and talked with adults about our programs.
- **USD 497 Science Fair & Expo:** On February 8, the Kansas Earth Balloon had its first appearance in Douglas County. We saw about 150 people during the presentations. A total of 340 people attended.
- **Hillcrest Elementary:** Continued doing Extended Learning Opportunities this semester. We visit the classroom every other Wednesday.
- **New York Elementary 5th grade Class:** March 7. Lesson on water molecules and stages of water.

We are always looking for ways to reach more of the students in the county, so if you have any ideas or events that you would like to see us attend, please contact Jenica Nelson at the office at 785.843.4260 or email her at jenica.nelson@ks.nacdnet.net.

*In the end, we will
conserve only what
we love.
We will love only
what we
understand.
We will understand
only what we have
been taught.
~ Baba Dioum --
Senegalese*



Adult Education Highlights:

- **Pond Seminar - January 15:** We co-sponsored this event with Kansas Division of Water Resources, NRCS, and Douglas County Extension. 55 adults attended.
- **First Annual Kansas Farmers Market Conference:** February 28 and March 1. 50 people from around the state attended the conference. We were there along with K-State Extension, USDA Rural Development, USDA FSA, and Kansas Rural Center.
- **Sponsored Kansas Water Office Meeting:** March 14, 20 people attended.
- **Burn Demonstration at Clinton Lake:** March 15. Burn demonstration partnership with Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. 30 people attended.

Upcoming Events to Watch for: Lawrence Earth Day Celebration, Deerfield Elementary Kindergarten Science Day, and Cover Crop Field Day.

Looking for Nominations for 2014!

The 2014 Kansas Bankers Association Conservation Awards Program recognizes farmers and ranchers who have completed projects to improve environmental quality or conserve natural resources, such as soil, water, wildlife and energy. This program is co-sponsored by Kansas Bankers Associates, K-State Research and Extension, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and the Douglas County Conservation District.

The conservation awards are given in the following categories:

- Soil Conservation
- Water Quality
- Energy
- Wildlife
- Buffer
- Grassland

This program is a wonderful opportunity to recognize some of the landowners in Douglas County that have worked hard for conservation!

If you would like to make a nomination, please contact Dawn Buehler in our office at 785.843.4260 Ext. 3 or email her at dawn.buehler@ks.nacdnet.net.

Free Soil Test!

Free soil tests are available to Douglas County residents at K-State Research & Extension located at 2110 Harper, Lawrence, KS. Stop by with 2 cups of soil in a zip lock bag and they will help you complete the paperwork! Funding provided by a grant from Douglas County Conservation District.

Call the Extension office at 785.843-7058 for more information!

Congratulations to our 2013 Kansas Bankers Association Conservation Award Winners!

Buffer Award: Wak-N-Duk, LLC, Larry and Susan McElwain, John and Becky Thomas



Energy Award: Washington Creek Lavender Farm owned by Jack and Kathy Wilson



Grassland Award: Gerald and Deb Powell and Family



Soil Conservation Award: Larry and Eloise Craig; Mike, Julie and Dennis Craig



Water Quality Award: Daniel and Rebecca Squires



Wildlife Award: Clyde and Marybeth Mermis



Overview of Farm Bill Meeting

When: April 9, 2014, 7:00 p.m.

Where: Grace Community Church
310 E 8th St. (Hwy 56)
Overbrook, KS

Sponsored by the Osage County Conservation District. Josh Roe, Economist with Department of Ag will present an overview of the Farm Bill.

Horse Care & Management

When: April 16, 2014, 7:00 p.m.

Where: Lyndon Community Center
Lyndon, Kansas

Horse Care & Management will cover topics on preventative care and first aid for horses. Presenter is DVM Chris Blevins, KSU Equine Field Service Professional.

Spotted Wing Drosophila Workshop

When: April 7, 2014, 4:00 p.m.

Where: Douglas County Extension Office
Lawrence, Kansas

Sponsored by K-State Research & Extension, participants in this workshop will learn about the biology of the Spotted Wing Drosophila, its economic importance, how to monitor for populations, and management strategies for this pest. Workshop attendees will also receive a trap for monitoring on their farm. For more information, contact Marlin Bates at Extension at 785.843.7058.

What you see depends on how you view the world. To most people this is just dirt, to a farmer it's potential. ~ Doe Zantamanta



*You are Cordially Invited to:
The USDA Service Center's Open House
Douglas County Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, and the
Natural Resources Conservation Service*

Tuesday, April 29 from 11:00-1:00 pm
4920 Bob Billings Pkwy, Suite A. Lawrence, KS 66049
Come and see us at our new office and have a chance to visit with
our staff. Snacks will be provided by the DCCD.

Call our office at 785.843.4260 ext. 3 for any questions.
At noon the DCCD will be thanking Lee Whaley for his 20 years of
service on the Board of Supervisors.

Tractor Safety Training

When: June 2 & 3, 2014

Time: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Where: Wamego, Kansas

Sponsored by K-State Research & Extension. Tractor Safety Training is required if you are 14-15 years old working for anyone other than your parent or legal guardian. Youth 16 years old and older are welcome to attend to improve their safety skills. Registration & fees are due by May 27 to Pottawatomie County Extension.

For more information, contact Bill Wood at Douglas County Extension at 785.843.7058.

Mark Your Calendar!

Lawrence Farmer's Market opens April 12, 2014 for the season!

Native Plant Sale

Grassland Heritage Foundation

When: April 19, 2014

Time: 11:30 am – 4:00 pm

Where: South Park, Lawrence, Kansas

Join GHF at their 2nd Annual Native Plant sale and pick up some great Kansas natives for your home. They will sell a variety of native forbs (flowering plants) and grasses at the 14th Annual Lawrence Earth Day Celebration. All plants will be supplied by Baldwin's own Applied Ecological Services and are guaranteed to be Kansas natives. Close to 20 different varieties will be available potentially including Butterfly Milkweed, Cardinal Flower, Little Bluestem, and other species appropriate for home landscapes.

For more information, email Kim Bellemere at grasslandheritage@gmail.com.



Equipment/Services Available through the Conservation District free of charge:

Prescribed Burn Equipment

- * Drip Torch
- * Backpack Sprayer
- * Flapper

Soil Compaction Meter

Soil Probe

Call or stop by our office today to reserve!

Tunnel to Table Workshop

Kansas Rural Center

When: April 5, 2014
Time: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Where: Juniper Hill Farms
Lawrence, Kansas

The 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. workshop, which costs \$15, will offer both new and experienced producers, as well as farm service providers, information and resources relevant to strategic tunnel construction, crop production and management in Kansas. Call 785.992.4572 for more information.

~E-Newsletter~

Due to increasing budget constraints as well as conservation of natural resources, the District is moving towards using the electronic version of our newsletter. We will continue to send paper but encourage those that can to sign up for the electronic version.

Please send an email to Dawn Buehler at dawn.buehler@ks.nacdnet.net providing your contact information and email address or sign-up on our website at www.douglasccd.com. Thank you for supporting our conservation efforts!

Mark Your Calendar!

Lawrence Earth Day is set for April 19, 2014 from 11:30 am to 4:00 pm at South Park in downtown Lawrence, Kansas.

The Conservation District will be there....stop by and see us and our Soil Tunnel Trailer!

Find Us Online:

Website: www.douglasccd.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/douglasccd

Follow us for quick up to date information!

Douglas County Conservation District

Located in the USDA Service Center:

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Fax: 1.855.703.6403

District Manager: James.Weaver@ks.nacdnet.net

District Secretary: Dawn.Buehler@ks.nacdnet.net

Education & Outreach: Jenica.Nelson@ks.nacdnet.net

The Douglas County Conservation District Board of Supervisors meets the first Wednesday of each month at the USDA Service Center. If you have any questions or comments for the Board, or suggestions for this newsletter, please call 785.843.4260.

Douglas County Conservation District
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Lawrence, KS 66049

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DOUGLAS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Funding provided by the State Conservation Commission through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund. All programs and services of the Conservation District are available to anyone without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or handicap.

Board of Supervisors:

Steve Wilson, Chairman
Luke Ulrich, Vice Chair
Mike Flory, Secretary
Karen Willey, Treasurer
Ron Reed, Member

District Personnel:

Jim Weaver, District Manager
Dawn Buehler, District Secretary
Jenica Nelson, Education & Outreach

Natural Resources Conservation Service:

Coleen Davison, Acting DC
Tim Miller, Resource Conservationist

Douglas County Conservation District

785.843.4260 ext. 3
Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
Monday – Friday

Farm Service Agency: 785.843.4260 ext. 2

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Debbie Chappelle, Program Technician
Jody Hickert, Program Technician
Cindy Westervelt, Program Technician