



# CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Dickinson County Conservation District Newsletter

Issue #5 April 2016

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## Kansas Range Youth Camp Sponsorship

The Dickinson County Conservation District will once again offer a sponsorship for one or more Dickinson County students to attend the Kansas Range Youth Camp, sponsored by the Kansas Section of Society for Range Management.

The Kansas Range Youth Camp offers participants a learning opportunity in range plant identification, plant growth, stocking rate determinations, livestock nutrition, rangeland wildlife management, and more. Other activities include swimming, canoeing, fishing, hiking, various field trips, and a steak dinner. The camp is held at Camp Mennoscah in Murdock (Kingman County), Kansas. Tuition for the camp is \$250.

The Dickinson County Conservation District will sponsor one or more participants to attend the camp.

In the event the Conservation Districts receives applications for more than one student to attend the camp, the \$250 sponsorship will be divided equally between the participants and the remainder of the tuition will be the responsibility of the participant.

To be eligible for the sponsorship, participants must reside within Dickinson County, be an upcoming sophomore, junior, or senior (2016-2017 school year), and be available to attend the camp from July 12th through July 15th, 2016. Participants should be interested in plants, livestock, or wildlife.

If you are interested in attending the Kansas Range Youth Camp and would like to be considered for the sponsorship, please contact Cindy at the Dickinson County Conservation District by April 30.



### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ◆ April 1–30—Cost Share Signup
- ◆ April 11—Regular Board Meeting 10:00 AM Abilene Service Center
- ◆ April 24 to May 1—Soil Stewardship Week
- ◆ May 9—Regular Board Meeting 10:00 AM Abilene Service Center
- ◆ May 30—Office Closed Memorial Day
- ◆ June 13—Regular Board Meeting 10:00

# Cost-Share Signup Begins

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The Dickinson County Conservation District is conducting a sign-up now through April 30 to accept requests for state financial assistance to install enduring conservation practices. The Conservation District administers state cost-share programs locally to improve water quality and reduce soil erosion. Funding is provided by the Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture (DOC) through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund.

Landowners with natural resource concerns on their property are encouraged to visit the Dickinson County Conservation District to discuss the possibility of receiving state financial assistance. Fund is provided through cost-share payments to landowners for eligible practices, such as terraces, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, grass plantings, livestock water supplies, cross fencing, on-site waste systems, and abandoned well plugging. The sign-up does not guarantee approval of cost-share financial assistance. **Projects started or completed prior to being approved for funding are not eligible for these funds.**

Following the sign-up deadline, each request is carefully reviewed to ensure eligibility. The proposed project is ranked according to a system developed by Dickinson County Conservation District. The

ranking system ensures fairness to landowners and ensures cost-share funds are used to meet local conservation priorities. Landowners approved for the program are notified of the practice(s) approved and the estimated amount of cost-share that will be provided. Before the work can begin, the contract must be approved by the DOC and must be signed by the landowners.



The Conservation District works closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to protect and conserve natural resources, primarily soil and water.

Conservation practices funded with state cost-share funds must be installed and maintained according to NRCS and DOC specifications. It is necessary that landowners work closely with NRCS in the planning stage to ensure practices are applied correctly. Technical assistance for these practices is provided free of charge by the USDA.

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**All programs of the Dickinson County Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, age, or handicap.**



## Native Plants of Kansas

**Stems:** Erect, often much-branched above, stiff, leafy, mostly glabrous.

**Leaves:** Alternate, simple, sessile, linear to linear-lanceolate, 1/2 to 1 inch long, to 1/6 inch wide; margins entire to slightly toothed; tips pointed; mid-stem leaves usually with prominent glands at bases.

**Inflorescences:** Panicle-like, open, somewhat flat-topped, mostly terminal.

**Flowers:** 1 to 2 inches wide; sepals 5, lanceolate, overlapping, conspicuously glandular-toothed; petals 5, yellowish orange, reddish brown veins at bases; stamens 5, anthers yellow; styles 5, united below middle.

**Fruits:** Capsules, thick, egg-shaped, 5-segmented, each segment 2-seeded; seeds small, flattened, brownish.

**Habitat:** Dry sandy or gravelly prairies.

**Distribution:** West 1/2 of Kansas.

**Comments:** In Kansas, these plants are often less than 6 inches tall. The petals remain only 1-2 days. Jean Louis Berlandier, (1805-1851), for whom the plant was named, was a French botanist who worked in Texas and Mexico.

Closely related to stiffstem flax . Was formerly named *Linum rigidum* Pursh var. *berlandieri* (Hook.)

## Monarch Butterflies

The monarch is one of the most familiar butterflies in North America. The orange-and-black butterfly is known for its annual, multi-generational migration from Mexico to as far north as Canada. Monarch butterflies depend on milkweed to lay their eggs during the journey.

But monarch populations have decreased significantly over the past two decades, in part because of the decrease in native plants, including milkweed, on which their caterpillars feed. Agriculture and development have removed much of the native milkweed that once spanned the country.

Because monarch butterflies

are always on the move, they need to have the right plants at the right time along their migration route. Caterpillars need to feed on milkweed to complete their life cycle, and adult butterflies need the right nectar producing plants in bloom for needed energy.

With assistance from NRCS, producers and conservation partners can plant milkweed and nectar-rich plants along field borders, in buffers along waterways or around wetlands, in pastures and other suitable locations.

Learn more about NRCS' Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project. Stop by the Abilene USDA Service Center.



**Stop by our new website!**

**[www.dkcoconservation.com](http://www.dkcoconservation.com)**

- **News and updates**
- **Educational resources**
- **Conservation articles**
- **Forms**
- **PDF newsletter**



**Psst: Don't forget to update your bookmarks!**

# Stewardship Week

In 1955, the National Association of Conservation Districts began a national program to encourage Americans to focus on stewardship. Stewardship Week is officially celebrated from the last Sunday in April to the first Sunday in May. It is one of the world's largest conservation-related observances.

The Stewardship concept involves personal and social responsibility, including a duty to learn about and improve natural resources as we use them wisely, leaving a rich legacy for future generations.

One definition of Stewardship is "the individual's responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard to the rights of others." E. William Anderson suggests stewardship "is essentially a synonym for conservation."

Stewardship Week helps to remind us all of the power each person has to conserve natural resources and improve the world. When everyone works together with their local conservation district, that power continuously grows. We have seen these good deeds multiply across the nation's network of conservation districts and the results are spectacular!

## Try Backyard Conservation

Just as they do on the farm, conservation practices on non-agricultural land can help increase food and shelter for birds and other wildlife, control soil erosion, reduce sediment in waterways, conserve water and improve water quality, inspire a stewardship ethic, and beautify the landscape.

Backyard Conservation shows you how conservation practices that help conserve and improve natural resources on agricultural land across the country can be adapted for use around your home. These practices help the environment and can make your yard more attractive and enjoyable. Most backyard conservation practices are easy to use. America's farmers and ranchers have been using these practices successfully for decades.

Whether you have rural acreage, a suburban yard, or a city lot, you can help protect the environment and add beauty and interest to your surroundings. Ten conservation practices have been scaled down for homeowners: backyard pond, backyard wetland, composting, mulching, nutrient management, pest management, terracing, tree planting, water conservation, and wildlife habitat.

**Visit the Dickinson County Conservation District website to download a Backyard Conservation booklet produced by NRCS.**

**[www.dkcoconservation.com/forms-publications](http://www.dkcoconservation.com/forms-publications)**



*When the land does well for its owner,  
and the owner does well by his land—  
when both end up better by reason of  
their partnership—then we have conser-  
vation. - Aldo Leopold*

## **\$8.1 Million Available to Plant Trees, Protect Streams and Fields**

Story by: Jennifer Williams, Kansas Forest Service and Mitch Thierry, NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is now accepting applications for Kansas Forest Service's "Water Quality Improvement through the Implementation of Forestry Practices" initiative. A five-year partnership agreement between NRCS and the Kansas Forest Service provides free technical assistance, in addition to \$8.1 million in financial assistance to landowners who implement conservation practices, such as planting trees to control erosion and improve water quality.

With additional financial assistance from Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy groups, a landowner would only need to cover 10 percent of the total conservation project cost. "This project provides a great opportunity where conservation stewardship can add value to the property at a reasonable cost," said Eric Banks, NRCS Kansas State Conservationist.

Assistance is available for landowners in targeted watersheds. Many Kansas streams in the eastern third of Kansas lack adequate tree cover to stabilize streambanks. According to the Kansas Water Office, federal reservoirs in Kansas serve as the source of municipal and industrial water for more than two-thirds of the state's population. Runoff and erosion contribute to sedimentation of these reservoirs. Trees help stabilize river banks, keep debris off of fields, and ultimately improve water quality by reducing sediment entry into streams. This program also funds the improvement of the quality and productivity of woodlands and forests, which are vital to overall watershed health.

This type of partnership agreement is a new feature included in the 2014 Farm Bill. Called the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, it encourages partners to join in efforts with producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales. The program lets partners (such as the Kansas Forest Service) stretch their resources and share expertise to help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas.

Applications will be taken until funding is exhausted, and the project will be funded on a first come, first served basis as long as the resource concern meets the NRCS and Kansas Forest Service conservation criteria.

For more information on eligibility requirements and how to apply, call or visit your local NRCS office located in USDA Service Centers. Locations and contact information are available online at [www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov) by clicking on "Find a Service Center" under "Kansas Links." Eligible areas and more information can be found on the Kansas Forest Service website:

[www.kansasforests.org/streamside\\_forestry/rcpp.html](http://www.kansasforests.org/streamside_forestry/rcpp.html)

or by calling or emailing Bob Atchison, rural forestry coordinator with the Kansas Forest Service, 785-532-3310.



Two examples of Kansas streams where planting trees and other conservation practices would be potentially eligible for assistance.

# Wonderful "Weeds"

By Doug Spencer, Rangeland Management Specialist, Marion, Kansas

Start a discussion about "weeds" and you're likely to get several participants involved in a hurry. Questions such as "What does it look like?", "Do livestock eat it?", and the more popular one, "What do you spray it with?" I'm amazed at how passionately some producers are about killing "weeds". Passion is a great thing when targeted towards a true "weed" that is invasive to an ecosystem, but I often see plants that are native to the system be wrongfully targeted. These targeted native plants that so many call a "weed" might be wonderful! I know you're thinking, "Did he just say weeds are wonderful?" Yes, and I'll tell you why.

In a grazing land setting with cattle as the grazer, if it isn't grass, a lot of producers will call it a weed, even if it is native. "What do cows eat?" is a question I ask grade school students at field events and the resounding answer is, "grass!" Yes, but cows are picky as to what types of grass they'll graze and actually consume a fair amount of "weeds" or "forbs" (native broadleaf plants) as the grazing season progresses. In Chautauqua County, a study on the subject of grazing cows on native grassland done by Preedy et al. (2013) had some interesting findings. The cow's diet in June when the grass is lush consisted of approximately 85 percent grass and 15 percent forbs. By October, when the grass was more mature, the cow's diet shifted to approximately 75 percent grass and 25 percent forbs. Some key native forbs selected were heath aster (*Symphyotrichum ericoides*), dotted gayfeather (*Liatris punctata*), and purple prairie-clover (*Dalea purpurea*). That begs the question, Who would purposely spend money to remove 25 percent of their live-

stock's preferred diet?" The forbs we sometimes call a "weed" are actually feed.

Soil health is the talk in many agriculture publications. One of the key principles discussed is plant diversity. Several cover crop trials have been completed where plants were grown as a monoculture and then as a mixture of those same plants. Often the mixture outcompetes the monoculture plots in production. Diversity in our rangeland and pastures is just as important. In some instances, there are times that cows don't eat a particular forb species, but a look below the soil surface tells the whole story. Grass and forb roots are different in their root structure, rooting depth, the root exudates, and the symbiotic relationships with microbes they make. Studies have shown nutrient transfer in plants being facilitated by a mycorrhizal mycelial network. Research by Wilson, Hartnett, & Rice (2006) specifi-



cally looked at tracing phosphorus in Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and Louisiana sagewort (*Artemisia ludoviciana*). It was found that when either plant was the donor, phosphorus showed up in the receiver plant. It was also noted that Indiangrass was the stronger competitor for the phosphorus. If this network below ground facilitates the transfer of nutrients that are taken up from a forb (that many would call a "weed") and it shares with a grass that cattle readily graze, why would it be removed from the system? It's interesting to read publications that discuss how diverse mixes should be used in cover crop plantings and in the same publication advise how to kill your cover crop, now called weeds, in the native rangeland so we can have

## Wonderful "Weeds" (continued)

just grass. The forbs we sometimes call a "weed" allows the plant community to succeed.



We've discussed cattle but what about bees and butterflies? According to recent work by Shelly Wiggam, a Popenoe Fellow and PhD student at Kansas State University majoring in Entomology, some species of native bumblebee queens in the Flint Hills show a very specific preference for the forbs blue wild indigo (*Baptisia australis*), cream wild indigo (*Baptisia bruceata*), and prairie penstemon (or cobaea beardtongue—*Penstemon cobaea*). These plants are their sole source of pollen on which they lay their eggs and the larvae feed on to develop into bumblebee workers. Additionally, green antelopehorn (*Asclepias viridis*) and antelopehorn (*Asclepias asperula*) have been documented as the sole source of nectar for these same bumble-

bee queens, their sole source of energy while creating and maintaining a functional bumblebee nest for the entire growing season.

In addition to bees, the monarch butterfly is gaining more and more recognition as a pollinator species of conservation concern due to rapidly declining over-wintering population numbers. Milkweeds are in the spotlight because they are the only larval food source for the monarch butterfly. Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and green antelopehorn (*Asclepias viridis*) are two of several beneficial plants for the monarch and can often be found in Kansas rangeland and some pastures.

There is a vast number of additional pollinators that use specific flowering forbs at various times of year. It's easy to focus on specific parts of the ecosystem without seeing how decisions impact the whole ecosystem. These native forbs are part of the system for a reason and are often missing when herbicides are broadcast applied. The forbs we sometimes call a "weed" are plants another critter might need.

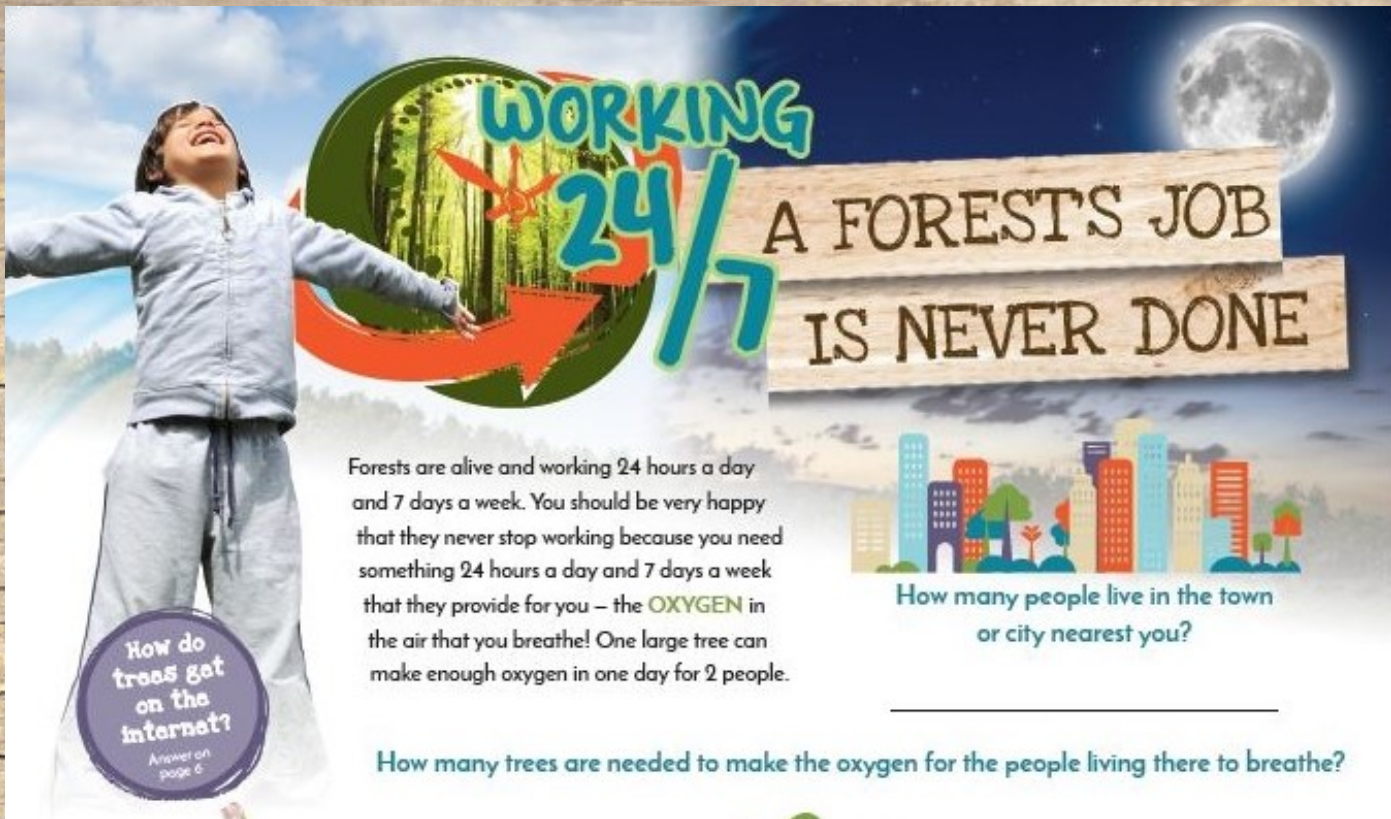
Even though these native forbs are grazed by livestock, add to diversity both above and below ground in a larger community of plants, and feed the larger ecosystem, "wonderful" might still be a stretch for you. Getting better acquainted with the plants that do grow on your land is a great first step. Knowing

whether they are native or invasive is also key. If you need additional information about plant identification, pollinator habitat development, or range and pasture management, please contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office. To find a service center near you, check your telephone book under "United States Government" or on the Internet at [offices.usda.gov](http://offices.usda.gov). Visit the Kansas NRCS Web site ([www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov)) or follow us on Twitter @NRCS\_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## References:

Preedy, G.W., L.W. Murray, W.H. Fick, L.A. Pacheco, E.A. Bailey, D.L. Davis, A.V. Siverson, and K.C. Olson. 2013. High-tannin forage utilization by beef cows V. Effects of corn steep liquor supplementation on dietary botanical composition of beef cows grazing native range infested by sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*). Proc. West. Sec. Amer. Soc. Anim. Sci. 64:317-325.

Wilson, G. W. T., D. C. Hartnett, and C. W. Rice. 2006. Mycorrhizal-mediated phosphorus transfer between tallgrass prairie plants *Sorghastrum nutans* and *Artemisia ludoviciana*. Funct. Ecol. 20:427-435.



How do trees get on the internet?  
Answer on page 6

Forests are alive and working 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. You should be very happy that they never stop working because you need something 24 hours a day and 7 days a week that they provide for you – the **OXYGEN** in the air that you breathe! One large tree can make enough oxygen in one day for 2 people.



How many people live in the town or city nearest you?

How many trees are needed to make the oxygen for the people living there to breathe?

\_\_\_\_\_ ÷ 2 = \_\_\_\_\_  
City Population                      Total # of trees needed



## US OR THEM: SHARING TREES

We aren't the only ones that need the oxygen from trees. Animals need it to breathe too. Animals need trees for lots of reasons. Aerial animals are animals that spend most of their time in trees. A few of these animals are mammals like squirrels, bats and monkeys. Some are amphibians like frogs or snakes. A LOT of birds live in trees.



Sometimes animals and humans use trees in the same way! Circle yes or no to answer whether or not humans and/or animals use trees in each of the ways listed. Some answers can be found in this booklet!

List animals that live in trees near you.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ways to use trees	Humans	Animals
Cut down trees to BUILD homes	YES / NO	YES / NO
Live IN trees	YES / NO	YES / NO
Eat fruit that grows on trees	YES / NO	YES / NO
Use shade from trees to keep cool	YES / NO	YES / NO
Store food in trees for the winter	YES / NO	YES / NO
Raise babies in trees	YES / NO	YES / NO
Gather honey made by bees from trees.	YES / NO	YES / NO

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# Thanks To TREES

Solve the puzzle to discover more ways we use trees.



## TREE TERMS

**Cellulose:** a fiber found in plant cells. 50% of wood is cellulose.

**Lignin:** an adhesive chemical that holds the fibers in wood together.

## ACROSS

- You might look a little messy after lunch if you didn't wipe your mouth with a \_\_\_\_\_ napkin.
- Thanks to \_\_\_\_\_ you have a roof over your head!
- Your dentist appreciates it when you use \_\_\_\_\_ every day, and it contains cellulose.
- If you like to shop you need to pay attention to the \_\_\_\_\_ tags made from paper.
- That comfortable rayon shirt you wear is made with tree \_\_\_\_\_.
- You couldn't play \_\_\_\_\_ without helmets and they contain wood products.

## DOWN

- You wouldn't want your baby brother or sister to sit on your lap without a disposable \_\_\_\_\_, and they contain wood pulp.
- Pancakes and \_\_\_\_\_ from a Maple tree are a great way to start the day.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ seat you sit on everyday could contain cellulose fibers mixed with other ingredients to make plastic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wouldn't taste so good without fruits that grow on trees.
- Cellulose powder keeps the grated \_\_\_\_\_ you sprinkle on your spaghetti from getting lumps in it.
- Tar from pine trees is used by \_\_\_\_\_ players for a good grip.
- Nothing tastes better than a hamburger grilled over hardwood \_\_\_\_\_.
- A lot of people depend upon \_\_\_\_\_ from trees used to treat diseases.

## CROPS & TREES: Sharing Space

Agroforestry makes good use of both agricultural and forestry practices and brings lots of benefits to YOU! Trees and shrubs are grown around, or even in, crop fields or pastures.



### What is Agroforestry?

*It is a land management practice that optimizes the benefits of interactions with trees and/or shrubs are deliberately combined with crops and livestock.*

### Agroforestry:

- increases soil fertility for the food crops YOU need.
- helps YOU have cleaner water by cutting down on nutrient and soil runoff.
- reduces deforestation so YOU have all the benefits you need from trees.
- cuts down on the need for toxic chemicals like insecticides, making the environment safer for YOU.

DID YOU KNOW?? Most members of the Kolufo tribe in Papua New Guinea live and raise their families trees.

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# CONSERVATION DISTRICT SERVICES

## Equipment Rental and Sales

The Dickinson County Conservation District provides conservation equipment rental service to area landowners. Contact Cindy Dooley at 785-263-2787 to schedule your rental.

### **Great Plains No Till Drill**

Delivered: \$50 Delivery Fee + \$15/Acre ● First 1/2 Acre Free

Customer Pickup: \$15/Acre ● \$80 Minimum

### **Truax Drill**

Delivered: \$40 Delivery Fee + \$11/Acre ● First 1 Acre Free

Customer Pickup: \$11/Acre ● \$40 Minimum

### **Drip Torch**

\$100 Deposit ● \$5/Day 1st 3 Days ● \$25/Day After 3 Days

### **30" Wire Stem Marking Flags—Fluorescent Pink**

\$10/100 or 10 Cents Each



**Don't forget to place your order for conservation trees with the Kansas Forest Service!**

Spring Season is open now through May 2nd.

Stop in the Abilene USDA Service Center for an order form and information.

Or visit [www.kansasforests.org](http://www.kansasforests.org) and click on the purple button at the top.

The Dickinson County Conservation District prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

Funding to produce this newsletter is provided in part by the Division of Conservation through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan.

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## Looking for a contractor?

Contact us for a list of contractors that will help achieve all your conservation goals: earthwork, brush cleaning, burning, well-drilling, fence building, and more!

### SEEDING DATES

Cool Season Grasses (brome, fescue)  
 August 1 to October 1  
 December 1 to April 15

### WARM SEASON GRASSES (NATIVE MIX)

December 1 to May 15  
 March 15 to May 15

### PRESCRIBED BURN DATES

CRP—February 1 to April 15  
 Rangeland—Late Winter to Green-Up



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DICKINSON COUNTY SERVICE CENTER  
328 NE 14TH STREET  
ABILENE, KS 67410



The service center is open  
Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM  
(except the following holidays)

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day



## USDA Service Center

### Conservation District

#### *Board of Supervisors:*

- Dennis Marston, Chairman
- Darren Haney, Vice Chairman
- Raymond Bielefeld, Treasurer
- Francis Anderson, Member
- Matt Gustin, Member
- Cindy Dooley, District Manager
- Brian Lang, Drill Manager

### Pheasants Forever

- Allie Rath, Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

### NRCS Staff

- Kenny Bowell, Supervisory District Conservationist
- Danny Carroll, Soil Conservation Technician

### Farm Service (FSA)

- Braden Stueve, County Executive Director:
- Ellen Alvarez, Program Technician
- Tonya Askew, Program Technician
- Sandy Johnson, Program Technician
- Deb Marston, Program Technician
- Michele Snowball, Program Technician

## Dickinson County Conservation District

328 NE 14th Street  
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