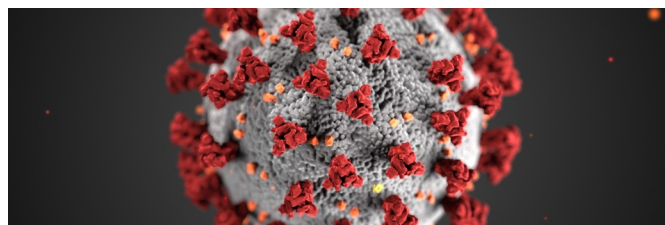


CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

a quarterly publication of the Dickinson County Conservation District



USDA Service Center
328 NE 14th Street
Abilene, KS 67410

Conservation District/NRCS—785-263-2787
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Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the USDA Service Center in Abilene is open for business by phone appointment only. While our staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our agricultural producers by phone and using email and online tools whenever possible. Field work, including conservation planning assistance, will continue with appropriate social distancing.



The Dickinson County Conservation District will continue to provide access to educational and financial resources to Dickinson County residents. Our staff will work via phone and email until further notice. If you have questions or need immediate assistance, please contact us:

Cindy Montgomery
785-263-2787 extension 332
785-200-4467
cindy.montgomery@ks.nacdnet.net
information@dkcoconservation.com

Funding for some programs provided by the Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund.

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.

Kansas Food and Ag Industry Continues to Focus on Essential Functions

The Kansas Department of Agriculture continues to support the state's food and agriculture industry as it serves an essential role across the state. With today's announcement that Governor Laura Kelly has issued a statewide "stay home" order (Executive Order No. 20-16), it is important to emphasize that those food and agriculture businesses must keep a strong focus on their essential functions and follow safety protocols.

The Governor's Kansas Essential Function Framework, outlined in the executive order, clearly identifies food and agriculture businesses as essential functions that are exempt from the stay home order. KDA will continue to provide support and guidance to those businesses as needed, but urges all of those in the food and agriculture industry to scrutinize their activities and staffing and limit them to those which are essential to the food supply chain, public health and safety, and protection of animal health and welfare.

The food and agriculture industry truly serves an essential role in this statewide response, and all those who work within that industry are playing an important part in keeping the state fed, healthy and safe. "Since Kansas is the fifth largest state in regard to value of agricultural production, our state's role in the production of food, fuel and fiber remains critical for consumers everywhere," said Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam. "KDA is grateful to these dedicated Kansans who are working every day throughout this crisis, and appreciates their commitment."

KDA reminds those food and agriculture businesses that while they continue to operate, they must — to the extent possible without significant disruption to essential functions — use telework capabilities to avoid meeting in person. Any essential functions being performed on-site or in-person must — to the extent possible without significant disruption to essential functions — follow appropriate safety protocols, including maintaining a six-foot distance between individuals and limiting gatherings to fewer than 10 people. When not performing an essential function, or traveling to or from work to perform an essential function, individuals must adhere to the stay home order.

In addition, all food and agriculture businesses should continue to follow all Kansas Department of Health and Environment protocols to protect the health of their employees: regular handwashing; routine cleaning of all frequently touched surfaces; adequate supplies of soap and water, hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes, and tissues; promoting proper coughing and sneezing etiquette; and especially



USDA is open for business. Our team is continuing to provide the best customer service we can while also prioritizing the health of our employees, the health of our customers, and the health of our partners.

USDA's Service Centers are open in Washington State by phone appointment only. This includes the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency and Rural Development.

While our program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our customers by phone, by email, and using other online tools whenever possible.

To learn more about USDA programs and the Department's response to the Coronavirus visit farmers.gov/coronavirus or www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus.

To locate your local Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.



sending home any employee who is sick or who has been exposed to COVID-19.

All of these efforts are critical to slowing the spread of the virus and limiting the impact on local healthcare workers and hospitals. Although many rural areas have not seen the effect of the virus thus far, the health care system in those rural areas has a more limited capacity and could feel the impact quickly if precautions are not taken now.

Information about the state's response to this emergency event can be found the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's COVID-19 Resource Center at www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus, and ag-related support and guidance can be found on the KDA website at www.agriculture.ks.gov/coronavirus.

The great work of the Riley County Conservation District was featured in the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Report for 2019, available online at:

<https://www.nacd.com/nacdcom/assets/file/public/2019annualreport/>

Partner Updates

KDHE and KDA Recommend Voluntary Reduction in Burning

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic currently impacting all states, including Kansas, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Kansas Department of Agriculture strongly encourage all land owners and managers to voluntarily reduce the number of acres that they intend to burn this spring.

“With the potential for this pandemic overwhelming the state’s medical facilities, any additional respiratory concerns that could be produced from breathing smoke from prescribed fire need to be mitigated,” Dr. Lee Norman, KDHE Secretary, said.

Common health problems related to smoke can include burning eyes, runny nose, coughing and illnesses such as bronchitis. Individuals with respiratory issues, including COVID-19, pre-existing heart or lung diseases, children and the elderly may experience worse symptoms.

With resources of the county emergency response staff already being taxed with COVID-19 response, it is important to minimize responses that would come with prescribed fire activity.

It is critical that land managers in areas included in the Smoke Model available online at ksfire.org consult the model if they do choose to burn. The model indicates the level at which a burn would contribute to urban area air quality problems. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam urges land managers to refrain from burning, especially if your area is predicted in the large (red) contribution range.

“Prescribed burning is a valuable land management tool in the efforts to fight invasive species and maximize land productivity, and this request should not be interpreted as an indictment of the practice of burning,” Beam said. “However, the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus pandemic have created a situation that calls for reducing burned acres this spring.”

For the latest information related to COVID-19, and to sign up for daily updates sent to your email inbox, visit the Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s COVID-19 Resource Center at www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus.

USDA Invests More Than \$1.4 Million in Partner-Driven Projects that Protect Natural Resources in Kansas

SALINA, Kansas, April 16, 2020 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today that it is investing \$1.4 million in Kansas for a Partner-driven conservation project through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS will leverage \$1.5 million Partner contributions in Kansas.

“We are excited that this project was selected for funding. The Ogallala Aquifer is a critical resource in this region,” said Troy J. Munsch, Kansas Acting State Conservationist. “We have a long and successful relationship with many of the Partners involved in this project.”

RCPP uses a Partner-driven approach to fund innovative solutions to natural resource challenges. Together with NRCS, Partners implement a variety of conservation activities with private landowners and producers. These include land management practices and systems, conservation easements, and watershed structures. The mix of conservation activities carried out under each project is dependent on a project’s goals, objectives, and conservation benefits.

RCPP projects offer impactful and measurable outcomes. They support diverse agricultural and natural resource objectives. These include helping farmers and ranchers improve water quality, soil health and drought resiliency, protecting drinking water supplies, and enhancing wildlife habitat.

In Kansas, NRCS will contribute \$1.4 million and leverage \$1.5 million from Partner contributions in order to amplify conservation efforts. The project will address source water depletion, as well as aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

View this multimedia story for a full list of projects located here .

Nationally, NRCS is investing \$206 million for 48 Partner-driven conservation projects across 29 States, while leveraging nearly \$300 million in Partner contributions.

RCPP was first authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. In the 2018 Farm Bill there were changes to strengthen the program and simplify its rules. RCPP is now a stand-alone program with \$300 million annually available for Partner-driven projects. In addition to the general RCPP projects announced today, NRCS has already awarded more than \$50 million for 18 renewals of 2014 Farm Bill projects. A separate RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) funding announcement is currently open.

Since 2015, RCPP has combined \$1 billion in NRCS investments with close to \$2 billion in Partner dollars to implement conservation practices nationwide. There are currently 341 active RCPP projects and close to 2,000 RCPP Partners.

Information about the Regional Conservation Partnership Program is available at: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/>

State Cost-Share Sign Up

The Dickinson County Conservation District is conducting a state cost-share sign-up April 15, 2020 through June 1, 2020 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.

Due to the statewide shelter at home order, we are conducting our cost-share signup online, via email and phone. Landowners with natural resource concerns on their property are encouraged to visit the Dickinson County Conservation District online at www.dkcoconservation.com/forms to apply for state cost-share assistance. Funding is provided through cost-share payments to landowners for eligible practices such as terraces, grassed waterways, field wind-breaks, grass plantings, livestock water supplies, cross fencing, on-site waste systems, and abandoned well plugging. Application 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 the DOC and 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 implementation begins, the contract must be approved by the DOC and must be signed by the landowners and returned to the Dickinson County Conservation District.

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. Landowners must 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 NRCS.

All programs of the Dickinson County Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

For more information concerning state cost-share programs and other available services, please contact Cindy Montgomery, District Manager, Dickinson County Conservation Service, 785-263-2787 extension 332.

Dickinson County Cost Share Funding History

The following represents actual dollars of cost-share funding paid to landowners from 2015 to present day
(Not all 2019 or 2020 contracts are implemented or paid.)

2015	\$ 18,780.92	2015	\$ 12,684.42
2016	\$ 16,106.05	2016	\$ 11,973.10
2017	\$ 16,160.63	2017	\$ 15,300.00
2018	\$ 14,321.25	2018	\$ 11,610.00
2019	\$ 11,515.25	2019	\$ 10,710.00
2020	\$ 5,241.13	2020	\$ 6,750.00

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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 extension 332 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 Grass Seed Drill

Delivered: \$40 Delivery Fee + \$11/Acre
First 1 Acre Free
Customer Pickup: \$11/Acre
\$40 Minimum

Drip Torch

\$100 Deposit
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CoCoRaHS Rain Gauge—\$32

30" Wire Stem Marking Flags—Fluorescent Pink

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(\$10 minimum)

CALENDAR

NOTARY PUBLIC SERVICE AVAILABLE

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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