

# **Conservation in Kansas: An Overview**



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Kansas Association of Conservation Districts**



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## Introduction

The Dirty Thirties will forever be remembered as a time of tremendous hardship. We've seen those riveting photographs of towering brown clouds rolling across the Great Plains. We've read the accounts of farmers who were powerless to save their crops and livestock, of housewives who frantically applied wet sheets to seal their homes' windows against the invading dirt, of families who lost loved ones to dust pneumonia. It was a time of severe economic loss and profound suffering.

But out of that devastation a dedication to conservation was born. In February 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a letter to all state governors urging them to set up soil conservation districts to work with the Soil Conservation Service, which had just been established as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



On March 25, 1937, Kansas Governor Walter Huxman signed into law the Conservation District Act, which authorized the establishment of conservation districts in all 105 of the state's counties. The following year, Labette County formed the first Kansas conservation district.

**When we talk about conservation in Kansas, what exactly are we referring to?** The term relates to the preservation of the state's natural resources: its soil, water, air, plants and animals. Kansas conservation, then, is a system of initiatives designed to ensure that our natural resources remain abundant for generations to come.

This publication provides an overview of the agencies and organizations whose missions are aimed at preserving the state's natural resources. In addition, it outlines some of the key programs and activities that have been at the heart of our efforts and have elevated Kansas to a model state for its strong, enduring commitment to conservation.

# Conservation in Kansas: An Overview

## 1. Kansas Conservation Districts

**History.** The Kansas Legislature passed the Conservation District Law in 1937, which authorized the creation of conservation districts in each of the state's 105 counties. The first conservation district in Kansas was established in Labette County in 1938. All other counties followed suit, and the final conservation district was formed in Shawnee County in 1954.

**Funding.** Kansas conservation districts are political subdivisions of state government charged with the conservation of soil, water, and other natural resources within county boundaries. Their funding comes primarily from appropriations by the county and the state, but some county conservation districts also derive funds from selling conservation goods and services.

**Governance.** Each county elects five local citizens to serve as supervisors of its county conservation efforts. The Board of Supervisors, which meets monthly, identifies local priorities, establishes policy, and administers non-regulatory conservation programs. Supervisors, who do not receive a salary, are responsible for hiring and supervising employees that coordinate the daily operations and activities of the district.

**Annual Meetings.** Each county conservation district holds an annual meeting, either in January or February. These annual meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for local citizens to hear about the accomplishments of their county conservation district, learn more about conservation programs, and conduct an election for the position(s) of supervisor to fill the expired three-year term(s). All qualified electors in the county are eligible to vote in the election.

**Conservation District Activities.** Conservation districts are citizen-directed; that is, they address a wide range of concerns particular to the residents of their county. They address a multitude of environmental concerns, such as agricultural and urban erosion and sediment control, water quality and quantity, range and pasture management, fish and wildlife habitat, and other natural resource management issues.

Conservation districts provide information to landowners, schools, and the general public about soil and water conservation issues. Many districts have equipment available to rent that promotes conservation, such as grass drills, tree planters, and no-till seeders. Services and activities vary with each conservation district according to local needs and resources.

In addition to local programs, conservation districts administer the state cost-share programs that provide financial assistance to landowners in the implementation of

conservation practices. District employees work closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and cooperate with other federal and state agencies to help protect and conserve natural resources in Kansas.

## **2. Kansas Watershed Districts**

**Definition.** A “watershed” is defined as all the land area that drains to a particular water resource point, such as a lake or stream. In Kansas, there are more than 85 organized watershed districts, which encompass approximately 35 percent of the state’s total land mass.

**History.** The Kansas Legislature passed the Watershed District Act (K.S.A. 24-1201 et seq.) in 1953 in order to address water management issues resulting from erosion, floodwater or sediment damages, and instability of natural water supplies. A key element of the measure was to develop a comprehensive general plan for a watershed that would provide flood protection for the residents and landowners.

Watershed districts are political subdivisions of state government and have limited taxing authority as well as the power of eminent domain.

Since 1977, the Kansas Legislature has appropriated funds to assist in the construction of flood detention and grade stabilization dams. These funds are appropriated to the Division of Conservation in the Kansas Department of Agriculture (formerly the State Conservation Commission, a stand-alone agency) and allocated to watershed districts for flood control projects.

**Governance.** A locally elected board of directors of three to fifteen members is responsible for administration of the watershed district. At least one director represents each sub-watershed located within the district. The directors serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

A watershed district board is required to have regular meetings no less than once each quarter during the year. An annual meeting is also held for the election of directors whose terms expire, as well as to report on the financial condition and activities of the district including proposed projects.

Watershed districts may employ personnel to assist in the performance of their statutory powers and duties. However, most watershed districts do not employ fulltime staff and do not maintain an office. One of the requirements for state assistance is a single contact person, called the “contracting officer,” in the watershed. His or her primary duties are to handle the administrative procedures necessary in the construction of flood detention dams.

### **3. The Kansas Conservation Partnership**

The Kansas Conservation Partnership represents a federal, state, and local collaboration that has existed in Kansas for more than 70 years. The three entities that make up the partnership are (1) the Natural Resources Conservation Service, (2) the Division of Conservation (formerly the State Conservation Commission), and (3) the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).** NRCS is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. Its mission of “Helping People Help the Land” has six primary goals: (1) high quality, productive soils; (2) clean and abundant water; (3) healthy plant and animal communities; (4) clean air; (5) an adequate energy supply; and (6) working farms and ranchlands.

Since the Dust Bowl days in the thirties, NRCS has worked with conservation districts and others to assist landowners, as well as federal, state, tribal, and local governments and community groups.

Locally-based NRCS staff members work directly with farmers, ranchers, and others to provide technical and financial conservation assistance, such as the development of conservation plans and advice on the design, layout, construction, management, operation, maintenance, and evaluation of the recommended voluntary conservation practices.

NRCS activities include farmland protection, upstream flood prevention, emergency watershed protection, urban conservation, and local community projects designed to improve social, economic, and environmental conditions.

NRCS conducts soil surveys, conservation needs assessments, and the National Resources Inventory to provide a basis for resource conservation planning activities and to provide an accurate assessment of the condition of the nation’s private lands. As the leading source of technology as it applies to natural resource conservation on private lands, NRCS develops technical guides and other web-based tools to help enhance natural resource conservation efforts.

For more information, please visit [www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact Kansas NRCS at (785) 823-4500.

**Division of Conservation (DOC).** The Division of Conservation in the Kansas Department of Agriculture was formerly the State Conservation Commission, a stand-alone agency of state government. In 2011, Governor Sam Brownback issued an executive order to reorganize the SCC and two other agencies and place them within the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

The term “State Conservation Commission” is now used only to refer to the elected and appointed members of the board previously serving the State Conservation Commission before it became the Division of Conservation. The members on this board will continue to hold their positions and their powers, and their duties and functions have not changed.

The DOC administers programs to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, conserve water, reduce flood potential, provide local water supply, and assure that aggregate mining sites are reclaimed. This effort is achieved in cooperation with 105 local conservation districts and the more than 85 organized watershed/drainage districts, as well as with state, federal and nonprofit entities. The DOC is assigned responsibilities for administering provisions of the Conservation District Law, the Watershed District Act, the Surface-Mining Land Conservation and Reclamation Act, and other statutes authorizing various programs.

For more information, please visit [www.ksda.gov/doc](http://www.ksda.gov/doc) or contact DOC at (785) 296-3600.

**Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD).** The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is a voluntary, nongovernmental, nonprofit, 501(c)(4) organization that was established in 1944, two years before the National Association of Conservation Districts was formed. Its members are the conservation districts located in the state's 105 counties. The KACD Board of Directors is composed of five elected members, each of whom represents one of five geographical areas of the state.

KACD's mission is "to promote the establishment of and give support to programs designed to advance the conservation and orderly development of Kansas land, water, and related resources." To do so effectively and systematically, in 2008 the organization undertook a broad-based strategic planning process that identified four primary goals: (1) be an effective advocate for the protection of Kansas soil, water, air, plants, and animals; (2) strengthen key partnerships among entities committed to wise and efficient conservation practices; (3) facilitate conservation education and information; and (4) ensure strong, efficient association leadership. *The KACD Five-Year Strategic Plan, 2009-2013*, outlines objectives and action steps associated with each goal.

The primary activity of KACD is its annual convention, held each year in November. The event features breakout sessions and keynote speakers aimed at providing conservation district supervisors, employees, and members of partner and affiliated organizations with information pertaining to best practices and district operations. It also provides important opportunities for attendees to network and form mutually beneficial connections.

Apart from the Board of Directors, the association has nine standing committees with specific areas of emphasis: (1) Conservation Education and Youth; (2) Wildlife, Recreation and Forestry; (3) Natural Resources; (4) Grasslands; (5) District Operations and Resolutions; (6) Endowment; (7) Finance and Development; (8) Urban and Rural Development; and (9) Stewardship. KACD's affiliated committees/organizations include Kansas Envirothon, the KACD Employees' Organization, and the KACD Auxiliary.

For more information, please visit [www.kacdnet.org](http://www.kacdnet.org) or contact KACD at (785) 832-9400.

## 4. Conservation Programs

There are a number of conservation programs that exist on the local, state, and federal levels that provide financial assistance and information to landowners and others regarding the wise use of Kansas natural resources. Following is a list of some of the most common state and federal programs administered at the district level. Some districts have local cost-share programs as well, but the local cost-share programs are typically modest and are sometimes used to supplement state cost-share.

### STATE PROGRAMS

**The Water Resources Cost-Share Program (WRCSP)** provides financial assistance to landowners for the establishment of conservation practices that reduce soil erosion, improve or protect water quality, and enhance water supplies. The conservation district in each county, managed by 525 locally elected supervisors, administers the program at the local level. The Division Of Conservation (DOC) develops regulations, policy, and procedures to guide program implementation. The DOC and conservation districts are assisted in implementation of the program by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). All structures or practices cost-shared by the DOC through the WRCSP are required to be built to NRCS standards and specifications.

**The Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program (NPSPCP)** is a voluntary program providing technical and financial assistance to implement non-point source pollution control measures for the protection and restoration of surface and ground water quality. Conservation districts receive funding from the DOC in the form of financial assistance provided to landowners on a cost-share basis to implement a locally developed Non-Point Source (NPS) Pollution Management Plan. Conservation districts in high workload Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) management units receive funding for technical assistance. The funds are used to hire soil conservation technicians, who provide technical assistance to landowners for the installation of best management practices that reduce soil erosion and improve water quality. Funding partners include the NRCS, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, and the Kansas Department of Health And Environment.

**The Kansas Water Quality Buffer Initiative**, enacted by the 1998 Legislature by amending K.S.A. 2-1915, is an incentive program complementing the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). State incentives supplement federal incentives to encourage the establishment of riparian forest buffers and vegetative filter strips. The DOC will enter into 10- to 15-year contracts, subject to annual appropriation, to compensate landowners for acres enrolled in the initiative. Supplemental payments offered under the initiative will match 30 to 50 percent of the federal payment, based on



the type of vegetation planted. The initiative also provides property tax incentives for landowners statewide that enroll buffers adjacent to streams in the program. The state buffer eligible area now includes all high-priority TMDL (total maximum daily load) and federal drinking water reservoir watersheds in the state.

**The Riparian and Wetland Protection Program (RWPP)** was developed through the State Water Plan and authorized in 1989 by amending K.S.A 2-1915. The goal of the RWPP is to protect, enhance, and restore riparian areas, wetlands, and associated habitats by providing technical, educational, and financial assistance to landowners and the public in general. The major objective of the program is to design and install projects that demonstrate the effectiveness of riparian and wetland protection in terms of stream functions, water quality and wildlife benefits, and to increase the knowledge and awareness of landowners and the general public on the value and benefits of these natural areas.

## **FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

**The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program** provides technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. The CTA Program provides the technical capability, including direct conservation planning, design, and implementation assistance, that helps people plan and apply conservation on the land. This assistance is provided to individuals, groups, and communities who make natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands. NRCS, through the CTA Program, provides conservation technical assistance that addresses natural resource conservation issues at the local level that are of state and national concern.

**The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** is a voluntary conservation program from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The program promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to assist eligible participants install or implement structural, vegetative, and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land. EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practice and a maximum term of ten years. EQIP activities are carried out according to a conservation plan of operations developed with the program participant(s). Conservation practices are subject to Kansas NRCS electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) standards and specifications. Farmers and ranchers may elect to use a certified technical service provider for technical assistance, if available.

**The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource

concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with federal, state, and tribal environmental laws and encourages environmental enhancement.

**The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. Participants agree to implement a wildlife habitat development plan and USDA agrees to provide financial assistance for the implementation of wildlife habitat development practices.

**The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** is a voluntary program to restore wetlands. Participating landowners can establish conservation easements of either permanent or 30-year duration, or can enter into restoration cost-share agreements where no easement is involved. In exchange for establishing a permanent easement, the landowner receives payment up to the agricultural value of the land and 100 percent of the restoration costs for restoring the wetlands.

**The Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)** is offered in all 50 states and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups. The program provides many conservation benefits including improvement of water and soil quality, wildlife habitat enhancements, and adoption of conservation activities that address the effects of climate change. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

## **5. The Economics of Conservation**

For every dollar a county appropriates for its conservation district, the typical fiscal return on investment is anywhere from one hundred to several hundred percent. In a recent year in one Kansas county, for example, the amount budgeted for the conservation district was \$27,300, which generated federal and state cost-share dollars that equaled a 177-percent return on that investment. There are a number of variables that determine a county's return on investment, but counties generally see a positive return on the dollars they invest.

For more than seventy years, Kansas conservation districts and producers have been working with each other and with our partners, the Division of Conservation (formerly SCC) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to better utilize and preserve the land. As programs have been added and technology has become more sophisticated, Kansas counties have received millions of dollars through cost-share initiatives on the local, state, and federal levels. The result has been that producers have experienced better yields, and the cost savings to the state's roads, bridges, rivers and streams have been significant. Wildlife habitats, too, are better preserved.

In short, both the agricultural community and society as a whole benefit from investments in conservation. Clean water and productive soils are basic to our quality of life now and in the future.

## **6. Conservation Education**

A primary role of KACD is to facilitate conservation education and information not only among the state's conservation community but with the general public as well. A high priority for the association is educating Kansas youth about conservation issues and practices. In addition to affiliated organizations whose chief missions are conservation education (such as KACEE and the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, both of which are described in the "Affiliated Organizations" section in the Appendix), KACD has two committees dedicated to youth conservation education:

**Conservation Education and Youth Committee.** This committee facilitates the association's sponsorship of several annual contests, including area and state speeches, state poster, essay, and limerick contests. The committee also coordinates two scholarship programs, the Conservation Legacy Scholarship Program and the KACD Conservation Education and Youth Committee Scholarship Program. For more information on the Conservation Education and Youth Committee's activities, please visit [www.kacdnet.org/conservationcommittee.html](http://www.kacdnet.org/conservationcommittee.html).

**Kansas Envirothon.** The Kansas Envirothon is an outdoor, environmental high school competition where students learn and are tested on soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatics and a current issue. The winning team of Kansas Envirothon participates in the Canon Envirothon, which is North America's largest high school environmental education competition. For more information on Kansas Envirothon, please visit [www.kacdnet.org/kansasenvirothon](http://www.kacdnet.org/kansasenvirothon).

## **APPENDIX: Affiliated Organizations**

There are numerous federal, state, and local agencies, both government and nonprofit, that are either wholly or in part dedicated to Kansas conservation. Following is a list of some of the organizations with whom the Kansas Conservation Partnership works to advance the conservation mission:

**Kansas Water Office.** The Kansas Water Office coordinates the Kansas water planning process in cooperation with the Kansas Water Authority. The Authority's 24 members include representatives from diverse water use interest groups and leaders of the state's natural resource agencies. Advice on policy development comes from Basin Advisory Committees in each of the state's 12 river basins and other local stakeholders. The Authority, in turn, advises the Governor and Legislature on water issues to be considered for policy enactment.

[www.kwo.org](http://www.kwo.org)

**Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources.** The Division of Water Resources administers 30 laws and responsibilities including the Kansas Water Appropriation Act which governs how water is allocated and used; statutes regulating the construction of dams, levees and other changes to streams; the state's four interstate river compacts; as well as coordinating the national flood insurance program in Kansas. [www.ksda.gov/dwr](http://www.ksda.gov/dwr)

**Kansas Department of Agriculture, Water Structures Program.** The Water Structures Program regulates dams, stream modifications, levees and floodplain fills for the protection of life, property and public safety. The program also provides technical assistance and coordination for local communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program. Examples of activities regulated by the Water Structures Program include construction, modification, or repair of dams, bridges, culverts, weirs, low-water crossings, low-head dams, intake/outfall structures, boat ramps, pipeline/cable crossings, grassed waterways, other channel modifications, levees along streams, placement of fill within the floodplain, and gravel/sand dredging. [www.ksda.gov/structures](http://www.ksda.gov/structures)

**Kansas Department of Health and Environment.** The KDHE administers state and federal environmental laws and programs to protect the public health and environment. The programs include Air Quality Control, Environmental Remediation, Ground Water Protection, Hazardous Waste, Non-Point Source Pollution Control, Public Water Supply, Solid Waste Management, Surface Mining, Underground Injection Wells, Water Pollution Control and Water Quality Assessment. The KDHE seeks to achieve the environmental goals and legislative mandates that are regulatory in nature. [www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)

**Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.** The KDWPT has natural resource responsibilities and its mission is to address the state's outdoor recreational opportunities and natural resource protection. The operational structure of the department consists of the line divisions of Park and Public Lands, Fisheries and Wildlife, Law Enforcement as well as the

support divisions of Administrative and Executive Services. These line and support divisions have the responsibility of managing department lands and waters, enforcing wildlife laws, managing and researching wildlife resources, maintaining environment and wildlife education efforts and addressing various federal and state mandates, such as acts relating to threatened and endangered species. [www.kdwpt.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us)

**State Association of Kansas Watersheds.** The SAKW, a nonprofit membership organization, was chartered in 1951 to represent all watershed districts in Kansas. The association's work includes, in part, stream mitigation and conservation easements. [www.sakw.org](http://www.sakw.org)

**Kansas Forest Service.** The Kansas Forest Service's Conservation Tree Planting Program offers tree and shrub seedlings, as well as other items for use in conservation plantings. Plantings may function as wildlife habitat, windbreaks, wood lots, timber plantations, or Christmas tree farms, among others. [www.kansasforests.org](http://www.kansasforests.org)

**Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams.** KAWS works with local people to create, protect and restore the state's wetland and stream resources. Organized in 1996, KAWS is a 501(c)(3) educational public charity reaching a broad spectrum of individuals, groups, and governments to improve the wetlands and streams they own or control. KAWS provides its services through 12 local chapters that cover the entire state of Kansas. [www.kaws.org](http://www.kaws.org)

**Kansas State University Research & Extension.** K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. It is a partnership between Kansas State University and federal, state, and county government, with offices in every Kansas county. One of its 12 program areas of focus is conservation of soil, water, and energy. [www.ksre.ksu.edu](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu)

**Kansas Geological Survey.** The mission of the Kansas Geological Survey (KGS), operated by The University of Kansas in connection with its research and service program, is to conduct geological studies and research and to collect, correlate, preserve, and disseminate information leading to a better understanding of the geology of Kansas, with special emphasis on natural resources of economic value, water quality and quantity, and geologic hazards. [www.kgs.ku.edu](http://www.kgs.ku.edu)

**Kansas Biological Survey.** The Kansas Biological Survey (KBS) is a research and service unit of the University of Kansas and an agency of the State of Kansas. The legislatively mandated mission of KBS is to gather, by field census and other means, information on the kinds, distribution, and abundance of plants and animals and to compile, analyze, interpret, and distribute this information through reports and publications. [www.kbs.ku.edu](http://www.kbs.ku.edu)

**Kansas RC&D Councils.** Resource Conservation & Development Councils work through a group of local citizens to find resources (such as grants, loans, additional partners) to benefit rural communities to improve environmental, social, and economic conditions throughout the state. RC&D's purposes are to promote conservation, development, and use of natural resources; to improve the general level of economic activity; and to enhance the environment and standard of living in communities. [www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/councils.html](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/councils.html)

**KACD Employees Organization.** The mission of the Employees' Organization of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is to provide professional assistance with the development and delivery of conservation district programs aimed at preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our natural resources. [www.kacdnet.org/employeesorg.html](http://www.kacdnet.org/employeesorg.html)

**KACD Auxiliary.** Members of the KACD Auxiliary support the purposes and activities of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts through various educational and promotional activities. [www.kacdnet.org/auxiliary](http://www.kacdnet.org/auxiliary)

**KACEE.** The Kansas Association for Conservation & Environmental Education, or KACEE, is a statewide nonprofit association of many public and private agencies, organizations, businesses and individuals. KACEE promotes and provides effective, non-biased, science-based conservation and environmental education to all Kansans. [www.kacee.org](http://www.kacee.org)

**No-till on the Plains.** No-till on the Plains Inc. is a nonprofit educational organization providing information to farmers on adopting No-till and other sustainable production methods, and to further develop those techniques. [www.notill.org](http://www.notill.org)

**Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.** The Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom seeks to involve Kansans of all ages in understanding the fundamental impact of agriculture on their everyday lives. The Foundation helps teachers learn about the state's leading industry and provides them with direction as they discover new ways to integrate agricultural awareness into their classrooms on a daily basis. [www.ksagclassroom.org](http://www.ksagclassroom.org)

**Farm Service Agency.** The FSA is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. It equitably serves farmers, ranchers, and agricultural programs for all Americans. The Kansas FSA State Office is located in Manhattan. [www.fsa.usda.gov/ks](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ks)

**Pheasants Forever.** Pheasants Forever is dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever members are a diversified group of hunters, non-hunters, farmers, ranchers, landowners, conservation enthusiasts and wildlife officials. [www.pheasantsforever.org](http://www.pheasantsforever.org)

**Environmental Protection Agency.** The priorities of Region 7 (Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri) of the United States Environmental Protection Agency are these: protecting and improving water quality across America's greatest watershed, the Missouri-Mississippi Basin; remedying a legacy of polluted soil by cleaning up neighborhoods in places as diverse as downtown Omaha and rural Missouri's Lead Belt; and enforcing a new generation of air quality laws that encourage industrial and transport innovation by protecting public health. [www.epa.gov/aboutepa/states/ks.html](http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/states/ks.html)

**USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.** NASS conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares statistical reports covering virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture. Production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm finances, chemical use, and changes in the demographics of U.S. producers are a few examples. [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov)

**Tallgrass Legacy Alliance.** The Tallgrass Legacy Alliance (TLA) was created in 1999 as a partnership among local ranchers, agricultural and conservation organizations, and representatives from state and federal agencies to spearhead a conservation initiative to preserve the four million acres of tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills, some of the last stands of tallgrass prairie in the nation. [www.tallgrasslegacy.org](http://www.tallgrasslegacy.org)

**Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition.** The KGLC was organized shortly after the formation of the National Grazing Lands Coalition Initiative (GLCI) in 1991. Since its inception, KGLC has instituted various projects to improve Kansas grazing lands such as range schools, coffee shop meetings, youth education contests, public education meetings, and videos covering management topics. [www.kglc.org](http://www.kglc.org)

**Playa Lakes Joint Venture.** The PLJV is a nonprofit partnership of federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups, private industry, and landowners dedicated to conserving bird habitat in the Southern Great Plains. PLJV provides science-based guidance and decision-support tools for all-bird conservation throughout the region, as well as outreach, coordination and financial support to its partners and local groups to conduct on-the-ground habitat work. [www.pljv.org](http://www.pljv.org)