

WATER WISDOM NEWSLETTER

MIAMI COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

October 2005

Conservation Winners To Be Selected

The process to select Conservation Award winners is underway. The Banker's Conservation Award program provides an excellent public relations opportunity for us to recognize landowners and operators that are making that extra effort to protect our natural resources. If you have someone in mind that should be recognized for their outstanding efforts in protecting their cropland, grassland, buffers or wildlife land, please let us know. Maybe they live across the road from you and we are missing them. We would really appreciate your help in honoring these deserving landowners and operators!

The awards will be presented at the Miami County Conservation District Annual Meeting which will be held Monday, January 23, 2006 at the Miami County Fairgrounds.

Conservation District To Receive Award

The Miami County Conservation District Board and Staff will be receiving the Governor's Recognition of Water Quality Education at the 61st Annual Meeting of Kansas Association of Conservation District's to be held in Wichita next month. The recognition is given to one district each year who has exhibited extensive efforts in educating the landowners and youth of their district.

Education is the key component to the success of the District's cost-share program and grant implementation. The District uses newsletters, news articles; booth's and displays at local events to reach the public.

The Conservation District is involved in several events to educate our youth including the Poster, Essay and Limerick Contest, Project E.A.R.T.H., 4th Grade Ag Days, Hillsdale Ecology Days, Stream Trailer Demonstrations, and Stream sampling.

Grassland Tour Planned

By: Leanne Stevenson, County Extension Agent

Anyone who manages a few acres of grass or hundreds of acres of grass is sure to learn something at the Grassland Tour scheduled for November 2 in rural Miami County. The Miami County Extension Office and the Conservation District are joining together to provide an opportunity for producers to view alternative practices that promote continued water quality and environmental stewardship.

Topics and tour stops include: alternative water sites; winter feeding sites; buffers and conservation program issues; cool-season and warm-season grass management; variable rates of fertilizer; and a pasture walk for identifying "what's out there".

Tour participants will meet at the Miami County Fairgrounds at 9:00 a.m. on November 2nd and tour several locations in the county, have lunch provided and return to the fairgrounds by 3:00 p.m.

Lunch will be a barbeque buffet served at the Corp of Engineers shelter house at Hillsdale Lake. Participants will need to pre-register to ensure that they will be provided lunch. A \$5 registration fee will be charged to help defray the cost of lunch, materials and transportation. For more information call Linda at the Conservation Office at 913-294-3751 ext 101 or Leanne at the Extension Office at 913-294-4306.

To adequately plan for enough food and materials, please RSVP to the Miami County Extension office or email lcoxbill@oznet.ksu.edu, by 4:30 p.m. Friday, October 28.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has provided financial assistance to this project through EPA Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Grant #C9007405-09

Grassland Tour Registration

Name _____

Address: _____

Phone# _____

Total number of registrants: _____ @ \$5 = _____

Send your registration and payment to: Miami County Extension, 20 S. Gold, Paola, KS 66071. Please make checks payable to: Miami County Extension

For registration information, contact Leanne Stevenson at 913 294-4306. We will accept late registrations, even those the morning of November 2nd, however those individuals cannot be guaranteed a lunch or transportation. Registration fee is \$5

Are Your Field Edges Losing You Money?

By: Becky Hendrickson, Buffer Coordinator

Harvest is under way in Miami County and as you pull into your fields this fall, take a good look. If your field edges are not as productive as the rest of the field then maybe it is time to enroll those areas into one of the CCRP (Continuous Conservation Reserve Program) practices.

Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, also known as Quail borders or CP-33, is a practice that pays to plant 30-120' buffer strips around the edges of existing crop fields. Benefits include an annual CCRP rental payment, \$100 per acre sign-up bonus and a practice incentive payment. Ninety percent of the cost of establishment is paid through cost-share and a practice incentive payment. Time may be running out to enroll land in Quail Borders as only a limited number of acres are eligible for this program across the State and we are nearing that limit.

In addition to the Quail Buffer program, CCRP offers other opportunities to make your land more profitable while improving water quality and our natural resources. If you are in need of a waterway, you can receive combined practice payments equal to 90% of the cost of constructing the waterway and also receive a yearly rental payment on the acres enrolled. Land along streams and scour areas can also be enrolled. An average rental payment for Miami County land is \$65 per acre.

Many Miami County parcels are also eligible for the State Buffer Program which offers an additional 30-50% rental payment for land enrolled along streams

CCRP can improve the profits from your land and the use of buffer strips can reduce total phosphorus loss by 90 percent if water flows evenly over the buffer strips! Visit the local USDA office or call Becky Hendrickson at 913.294.3751 Extension 106 to enroll in the program.

Cost Share Sign-up Underway

The Miami County Conservation District administers two cost-share programs designed to conserve soil and protect water quality. The initial sign-up for these cost share funds has been held and remaining funds will be allocated by ranking applications, at monthly board meetings, according to their benefits to water quality. To be eligible for cost-share assistance, landowners must receive approval prior to starting construction.

Landowners tend to wait until after harvest to apply for cost-share assistance but as funds are limited, it is important to apply as early as possible.

In addition to funding for erosion control projects on cropland, the funds from these programs can be used for livestock waste projects, plugging abandoned wells, upgrading failed septic systems, clean up of abandoned dumpsites, pasture management, and riparian protection.

Funds for the Nonpoint Cost-Share and Water Resources Cost Share programs are provided by the State Conservation Commission through a grant from the State Water Plan Fund.

CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

"Reward the Best - Motivate the Rest"

By: Coleen Davison, Soil Conservationist

There hasn't been much discussion of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) in Miami County, but it's on the way! CSP is designed to reward farmers and ranchers for adoption of advanced conservation systems. The motto of "reward the best, motivate the rest" describes this unique program. No other program recognizes and rewards farmers for ongoing high levels of environmental stewardship.

CSP is limited to specific watersheds which are selected each year. During the first three years of this program, 330 of the nation's nearly 2,200 watersheds were approved for funding. Other watersheds will be selected as funding becomes available until landowners in every watershed have a chance to participate within the next five years.

Although none of the Miami County watersheds have been selected, they soon will be. Local producers have time now to prepare the environmental records which are required for this program. CSP requires each applicant to provide records from at least the previous two years. While most operations maintain good financial and production records, environmental records will be needed to help producers document that they are meeting the performance required for the program payments. The more acres you have with demonstrated conservation benefits, the better your odds of meeting basic program eligibility and the larger your CSP payments will be.

A Self-Assessment Workbook is available to help you get a good idea about whether you are eligible for CSP. The workbook asks some basic questions about your agricultural operation. Are you in compliance with the HEL/Wetland provisions? Are all of your fields free of active gully erosion? Do you have a current soil test for every crop field that you apply fertilizer on? (A soil test is also needed for pasture and hay fields that are fertilized.)

The workbook reminds producers to develop a system for keeping environmental records. Do you have records of commercial fertilizer (and/or manure) applied to each field showing that the fields were fertilized according to soil test recommendations and nutrients are not being over-applied? Do you have a grazing management plan developed for your grasslands, including number of animals, grazing period, grazing distribution and management of access to water? Do you have records of your pest management application methods?

Now is the time to contact the NRCS office to find out more details of this special program. Copies of the CSP Self Assessment Workbook are available in the office, or on the web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

Call for an appointment to review and update your existing plan and also to develop a nutrient management plan. It's very important to implement these conservation practices now, prior to the CSP sign-up. By starting now, you will be able to provide the documentation proving that you are, in fact, a good steward. When the CSP is announced in Miami County, this will translate into larger program payments for you each year.

Free Forestry Workshop Scheduled in Anderson County Focuses on Woodland Management and Tree Planting

Improving forested areas along streams and proper management practices are the focus of an upcoming field workshop in Anderson County through the Marais des Cygnes Watershed Riparian Initiative. The workshop is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., November 10, leaving from the Anderson County Fairgrounds in Garnett

The workshop features a timber stand improvement project to improve water quality and improve the health of the property's trees. Workshop topics feature timber management, best management practices, timber stand improvement methods, inter-planting methods, stream bank stabilization and economic and water quality benefits of implementing improvements.

Ryan Neises, Marais des Cygnes Basin watershed forester for the Kansas Forest Service, said he is looking forward to working with local landowners on the importance of proper tree maintenance along stream banks that improve soil stability, stream stability and improve water quality.

The event will be held on-site and outside, rain or shine. Participants are requested to dress properly for the outdoors.

Through the Marais des Cygnes Basin Riparian Initiative grant, funds are available for forestry plantings, best management practices and timber stand improvement projects to be installed along stream banks and in riparian areas to improve water quality and provide an economic and wildlife improvement outlet for local landowners.

Free registration is available to those who register early no later than November 2. Registration will cost \$5 per person after the November 2 deadline.

For more information, and to register for either event, call Ryan Neises, watershed forester, at 785-242-2073 or by e-mail rneises@oznet.ksu.edu.

Hidden Money in Your Feedlots

By: Herschel George, K-State Watershed Specialist for Marais des Cygnes Basin

The price of fertilizer could be the one thing that will cause producers to look at the value of the manure used as fertilizer. A few years ago a producer was interested so we tested their manure. The results showed the manure was high enough that it only required 6.3 ton per acre to put 40 # P2O5 into the soil. According to the fertilizer prices a few weeks ago one ton of manure was worth \$4.40/ton. Nearly all of us have some manure stored in a barn or shed that needs hauled. Even more manure may be out there in the old big round bale feeding sites.

If you need an economic incentive, maybe the price of fertilizer will inspire you to clean those manure piles up and get it applied to the cropland early this fall. If you need help on how to collect a manure test, or understanding the manure test, give me a call at 913-294-6021 or email me at Hgeorge@ksu.edu.

Good Management Practices Prevent Water Pollution

By: Dan Devlin, K-State
Environmental Quality Specialist



Excessive phosphorus (P) is one of the biggest water quality concerns in surface waters of Kansas. Numerous lakes in Kansas are impaired by high P levels.

Excess phosphorus in water is a concern for aquatic ecosystems. Phosphorus enhances the growth of algae and other aquatic weeds, and can lead to excessive aquatic plant growth, often referred to as algae blooms. This unwanted burden of aquatic plant growth is termed "eutrophication." Eutrophication (excessive plant growth or algae blooms) in our lakes can result in:

- * Harmful effects on fish, caused by oxygen depletion,
- * Off-taste and odor in the water and other undesirable effects on drinking water, and
- * Undesirable effects on recreational activities.

KDHE estimates that about 25 percent of the P in surface waters that flows out of Kansas can be traced back to point sources, such as municipal waste treatment plants. About 75 percent comes from nonpoint sources, such as crop fields, livestock waste, and household septic systems.

Field measurements from K-State research plots indicate that total P losses from crop fields average about 0.4-1.0 lbs per acre per year. Of this total, about 75 to 90 percent of the P being lost is attached to sediments, and 10-25 percent is soluble P.

Two major causes of P loss from cropland include soil erosion and water runoff of surface-applied fertilizer or manure. Soil erosion is the most important factor in total P loss from cropland. Even where no fertilizer-P or manure is applied, measurements in Kansas indicates that cropland will lose about 0.25-0.6 lbs of total P per acre per year just due to soil erosion alone. Where soils are tilled, total-P losses are about 28-40 percent higher than from undisturbed sites. Where P fertilizers are applied, total-P losses increase by about 20 percent if the fertilizer is knifed-in, and 40 percent if the fertilizer is surface-broadcast.

Practices that reduce soil erosion are among the most effective Best Management Practices for phosphorus. These BMPs include no-till, terraces, buffer strips, and grass waterways. In addition, practices that place fertilizer-applied P below the soil surface and limit P applications to the amount needed (based on soil tests) are also effective.

No-till presents some special challenges as a BMP. Surface runoff of soluble P can be greater in no-till than in other tillage systems. As a result, P should be applied below the soil surface in no-till if at all possible; for example, either applied with the seed or in a deep band. Studies in Kansas show that knifing-in P in no-till can reduce soluble P losses by 50 percent.

Overall, modeling done in the Little Blue watershed show that total-P loss from cropland can be reduced 75 percent in a no-till system compared to a tilled system. Contour farming can reduce total-P loss by 25 percent. Installation of terraces can reduce total-P loss by 60 percent. And the use of buffer strips can reduce total-P loss by 90 percent if water flows evenly over the buffer strips! ddevlin@oznet.ksu.edu

The following non discrimination provision is being complied with and has been included in revisions of basic memorandums of understanding between the District and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. "The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program in To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer." For information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).



How long has it been since you took soil tests on the land you operate? Not just the fields that yield poorly, we mean all your fields, both cropland and grass! With the cost of fertilizer, knowledge of your soil is more important than ever.

Are you aware that funds are provided through a grant from the State Water Plan to have 10 soil analyses free of charge? The samples should be taken to the Miami County Extension Service Office, 20 S. Gold, Paola.

Inadequate soil testing has been a limiting factor in qualifying for the Conservation Security Program in approved Watersheds. You must have proof of soil test taken on all fields within the last 3 years.

Do it now!

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

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Linda Prothe	District Manager
Becky Hendrickson	Project Coordinator
Jim Bracken	Drill Technician

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE:

Gary Bruner	District Conservationist
Coleen Davison	Soil Conservationist
Bob Allen	Conservation Technician

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