



**KANSAS RURAL CENTER**

# Rural Papers

Reporting with commentary on agricultural and rural issues

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## Seeking Balance in U.S. Farm and Food Policy

*Whiting, Ks.* – In late January, the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) joined hundreds of other groups around the country to call for a more balanced farm bill – one that would make real progress toward supporting independent family farms, promoting entrepreneurship in rural America, enhancing conservation, advancing diversity and support for socially disadvantaged farmers, and tackling the serious hunger and diet-related health problems facing our nation's citizens.

A report, "Seeking Balance in U.S. Farm and Food Policy," was released January 22 with endorsements by more than 300 organizations, including the Kansas Rural Center. The report was developed under the auspices of the Farm and Food Policy Project, a collaboration of rural, family farm, conservation, anti-hunger, nutrition, faith-based, public health, and other groups.

Based on the common idea that all Americans, farmers or not, want strong local economies and the ability to buy healthy and affordable food, the report asserts that increasingly our national farm and food policies are out of balance. The Farm Bill, which Congress will renew in 2007 as it does every five years, will address agricultural production, food and nutrition assistance, rural development, renewable energy and conservation policies.

The report outlines ideas aimed at providing incentives for more environmentally-friendly farming systems; increasing conservation on working farms; reducing hunger and soaring rates of obesity; promoting entrepreneurship and economic development in farm and rural communities; encouraging local food production; and reducing barriers and creating opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers getting started in agriculture.

"KRC's work focuses not only on the producers of food, but on consumers and the health, safety and availability of food to rural and urban citizens alike," stated Dan Nagengast, Executive Director for the Kansas Rural Center. "Seeking the Balance' is a real attempt to define how the 2007 farm bill can provide a safer, healthier food system for all of us, and help us play a more responsible role globally."

A complete copy of the Farm and Food Policy Project's policy statement and recommendations may be viewed and downloaded from its Web site at [www.farmandfoodproject.org](http://www.farmandfoodproject.org). □

## Rural Papers

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**Rural Papers** is the voice of the Kansas Rural Center, Inc., (KRC), a non-profit organization that promotes the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education, and advocacy. The KRC cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of soil and water. KRC is committed to economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially sustainable rural culture. The KRC is funded by private foundations, churches, and individual contributions. **Rural Papers** is available to contributors or for a \$25 per year subscription to organizations and institutions.

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## The Small Farmer Commentary

### "He Always Wanted A John Deere"

by Mary Fund

*Forgive me for using this page for personal reflection. I recently lost my brother. He was only 63. His was a long slow declining illness, so all the usual declarations of "he's better off now" and "he no longer has to suffer" apply. We are deeply saddened, but understand that his time was up.*

*My brother Roger's story is similar to many old farm boys in rural America. At a different time in history, he would have been a farmer. As the oldest son, he would have been the one to stay and farm with his dad. But like so many others of his generation, he went to the city to make a living right out of high school.*

*In some ways, though, he never really left the farm. Despite the years he worked for the Burlington-Sante Fe Railroad in a variety of capacities, his heart was never far from his first home at the edge of the place known as "Amerugi" in southern Nemaha County.*

*Like a lot of old farm boys, he carried with him a sense of rural or small town values of taking care of your neighbors. In a time when too many people don't even know their neighbors, he not only knew them but he was part of their lives.*

*He scooped elderly neighbor's driveways, he mowed their lawns, raked*

*their leaves, he jump-started their cars, swapped help with other weekend driveway mechanics, and shared the tomatoes he raised in his back yard postage stamp- sized garden. All things he saw and learned growing up on a farm.*

*One of my early memories is of cool summer mornings riding home on top of a tall load of sweet smelling alfalfa hay. My two older brothers had stacked the load as I, who was barely able to reach the controls, guided the tractor across the field. My brother Roger would take over for the trip home. He would ease the hay wagon out of the field, shift into road gear, and we'd fly home kicking up gravel and dust all the way-- all was right with the world.*

*At his memorial someone noted that "He always wanted a John Deere". They didn't mean the lawn tractor variety, either. To my brother, I think it meant those summer mornings on the farm, when all was right with the world.*

*Someone at a meeting recently pointed out that we are now 2 or 3 generations removed from the farm, so it is harder and harder to find support and understanding for farm or rural ideals.*

*I don't believe it.*

*Continued on page 3*



*Working together is a long held family tradition for most farm families. Above the Fund work crew after a long day cutting firewood. Mary's brother is on the far left, and Mary is on the far right.*

## Briefs

### USDA Erred in Approving GE Alfalfa

In mid-February a Federal Court ruled in favor of plaintiffs challenging USDA's approval of genetically engineered (GE) alfalfa. In a precedent setting ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Breyer of the Northern District of California decided in favor of farmers, consumers and environmentalists who filed the suit calling the USDA approval a threat to farmers' livelihoods and a risk to the environment.

The suit was brought by a coalition of groups including the Center for Food Safety, Western Organization of Resource Councils, Dakota Resource Council, Sierra Club, National Family Farm Coalition, and others. Judge Breyer ordered a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be carried out.

In the ruling the judge found that the plaintiff's concerns that Roundup Ready alfalfa will contaminate natural and organic alfalfa are valid; "For those farmers who choose to grow non-genetically engineered alfalfa the possibility that their crops will be infected with the engineered gene is tantamount to the elimination of all alfalfa..." The judge also found that USDA failed to address the problem of "superweeds" that could follow the commercial planting of GE alfalfa.

The suit also cited concerns for the export market. Major customers have warned that they will discontinue imports of U.S. alfalfa if a GE variety is grown in this country. For more information please visit: [www.centerforfoodsafety.org](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org). □

## Food Policy News

### Food Policy Council Webpage Up and Running

The Kansas Food Policy Council (KFPC) has been in operation for over a year. What has been accomplished? A quick way to find out is to explore the new Food Policy Council webpage. It can be accessed from the Kansas Rural Center home page at [www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org). Click the button under "What's New?" in the lower right hand corner.

Or you can go there directly at <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/kfpc.html>.

There you will find links to this year's KFPC reports, pages for each of the Council's task forces, a virtual

tour of the Wichita Farmers Market wireless food stamp and credit card pilot card program, and lots of other information.

The Resources page includes links to Kansas and national programs and studies that bear on the issues of local food production, food security, and human health. If you work with people who are interested in improving the food and nutritional climate of the place where they live, this is the page for you.

And if you find these resources useful, please click the "Donate Now" button on our home page. You can contribute quickly, safely and easily to the Rural Center's work. □ DN

### New Report on Wildlife Benefits of CSP Issued

In mid-January, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition joined the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and the Izaak Walton League of America in releasing a report *Hidden Treasures: The Conservation Security Program and Wildlife*. The report finds that CSP: 1) provides substantial wildlife benefits, 2) that wildlife benefits vary from state to state, and 3) that with some changes in the next farm bill and USDA's implementation of the program, CSP could provide even greater wildlife benefits.

According to the report, one-half of the CSP payments in contracts signed by farmers in the 2006 CSP sign-up either support direct wildlife benefits or support pesticide use reduction practices that will likely benefit wildlife. The report is posted on the web at: <http://www.msawg.org/pdf/CSPWildlifeReport.pdf>. □

## Small Farmer Commentary

Continued from page 2

*There are a lot of other old farm boys and girls out there; and they have not forgotten their farm roots. There are even more who may not come from the farm, but who long for a world where neighbors matter, hard work is rewarded, and that feeling that "all is right with the world".*

*I write this not out of mourning or nostalgia, but to affirm that my brother's hopes and dreams and his love for the farm, the land, and nature live on in many others.*

*He may have lived as a city boy, but he always wanted a John Deere. □*

## Low Stress Cattle Handling Explained At Grazing Conference

by Jerry Jost



Above left, Dr. Lynn Locatelli, veterinarian from Benkelman, Nebraska, provided insight into low stress cattle handling techniques at the KGA conference on Jan. 20.

Assaria, Ks. - "Low stress handling techniques are one of the best returns on investment that a cattle producer can make," stated Dr. Lynn Locatelli, veterinarian from Benkelman, Nebraska. She spoke at the Kansas Graziers Association's Winter Grazing Conference on January 20. KGA sponsored the conference with support from USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Because of a growing interest in these practices, Locatelli concentrates her efforts on handling education, consultation and training. At the grazing conference, Locatelli shared many handling tips illustrated with numerous videos. Successful adaptation of these techniques, according to Locatelli, starts with increasing your skills of observation. "Look first for the initiator of motion," she advised.

Cattle define the pressure as you try to work them. This pressure becomes your motivator to shape

their behavior. Every time you release pressure you communicate that you are not a threat.

"Find the working zone," recommended Locatelli. "Approach the animal and when it responds, step back." Continue to apply and release pressure. This helps the cattle realize they are not prey but rather you are asking for their cooperation.

Locatelli stated the goal is to get the animals to work for you. This is something they will do only if you communicate correctly. In the universal law of cattle herding, she said the cattle are never wrong.

People communicate to cattle through their body language. Everything you do shapes their behavior. Locatelli advised every action you make should be a response to what you have observed. We see the world differently than cattle added Locatelli. Cattle have bilateral vision with less depth

perception than people. For a cow, colors are muted and fuzzy. Their heads go up and down to accommodate their limited perception of depth.

As a handler, you need to help cattle see where you want them to go. Once the herd begins to move, advised Locatelli, use that momentum to continue the motion you want. While this seems counter intuitive, work the cattle from the front of the herd. As the handler, you become their leader. If they learn to trust your leadership, they won't get upset.

"Once you create leadership within the herd," said Locatelli, "it becomes easy for the rest to flow." She advised to walk parallel with cattle movement to slow it down. To speed up movement, she advised, walk opposite the direction of cattle movement in a parallel motion. Be careful to not get too far back because that will put you in a driving position. Slowly rocking back and forth will help calm down the cattle.

"Speed is not a priority," cautioned Locatelli. "We need to slow down in order to get the job of working with cattle done more quickly. We need to work at cow speed."

This low stress approach requires a mental discipline, cautioned Locatelli. Often it is counter-intuitive to your past experiences. It engages your intellect and creativity as you work to understand animal behavior.

As a veterinarian, Locatelli is traditionally trained to look for illness. Working with Bud Williams, the widely acknowledged master of low stress handling practices, she has learned to look first for "wellness."

*Continued on page 6*

## CWFP Profile

### Small Changes Protect Water Quality

by Connie Pantle



Chris Visser's leaking fuel tank on his farm was located within 100 yards of the family water well. He replaced the faulty tank and installed containment tanks beneath them.

Wakefield, Ks.—To some, the changes that Chris Visser made on his Clay County farm may appear small. But to Chris, these changes are a move in the right direction. The possibility of grant money to improve things on Chris' farm prompted him to complete the River Friendly Farm environmental assessment through the Kansas Rural Center's Clean Water Farm-River Friendly Farm Project (CWF-RFFP).

Once a farmer completes the assessment, he is eligible to apply for up to \$5,000 in cost-share through the CWF-RFFP. The farmstead assessment portion of the RFFP illustrated the hazard of the farm's fuel tanks to water quality. "I didn't really think of the tanks before," he said. Chris was concerned because the diesel tank had a slight seep from the factory weld.

As the notebook pointed out, the tanks presented a special problem because the fuel tanks are located less

than 100 yards from the family's household water well.

With cost-share assistance from CWF-RFFP and his own funds, Chris replaced the leaking tank with a newly constructed tank, refurbished the remaining unleaded gasoline tank and placed both tanks in steel containment tanks or dikes. Chris chose two steel containment tanks rather than concrete because of the convenience. "If I needed to, I could move the tanks later on," he said.

Each containment tank holds 110 percent of the fuel tanks contents in case of a major spill. Chris plans to add a roof over both units this winter to prohibit rain water from standing in the containment tanks.

Chris said making these changes has protected his family's water supply. In addition, an important factor in the community is also protected since Chris' farmstead is

located 500 yards from Quimby Creek which drains into Milford Lake just two miles away.

Chris said the community is a little more aware of water quality due to Wakefield's location on the shore of Milford Lake. "It is talked about more now than it was 10 to 15 years ago," he said.

Another area that Chris highlighted while completing the notebook was the dump site of the farm's previous owner. Chris said he wanted to clean up the trash for environmental and stewardship reasons. "It is the right thing to do," he said. Therefore, Chris removed several truckloads from Quimby Creek and another area south of the farmstead and hauled it to the salvage yard for recycling.

The potential to enroll in the Conservation Security Program (CSP), if it becomes available in his watershed, motivated him to make changes now. Chris said the changes are "a side benefit for what may come." He is also making improvements in tracking his crop and field histories, pesticide/herbicide usage and nutrient management on his milo, wheat, soybean and hay fields.

In 2006, Chris also received cost-share from the Environmental Quality Initiative Program (EQIP) through the Clay County Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) to convert crop ground to no-till and to improve his pesticide management system.

With these changes, Chris is moving in the right direction. That direction is one with water quality and the future in mind. □

## Homemade “Bud Box” Saves Money And Reduces Cattle Stress

by Dale Kirkham

Galva, Ks. - Roger Koehn and his teenage sons, Jesse and Jake, didn't expect to find gold when they attended the Kansas Graziers Meeting in Assaria last month, but they went home with something equally valuable or more so. They have already saved thousands of dollars using the ideas on low-stress livestock handling they learned from Dr. Lynn Locatelli at the workshop.

Roger and his family operate a diversified grain and livestock farm

### Low Stress Cattle Handling..

*Continued from page 4*

“If cattle see humans as a predator, they will work to hide weakness just like they would with a predator in the wild,” cautions Locatelli. “If cattle are going to work for you, they must have your trust. If they are motivated by fear, they will only think of escape.” Once cattle calm down, a person has a much better opportunity to observe the real health of cattle.

Whatever time you spend with your animals, make it positive emphasized Locatelli. Respect the distance cattle seek. If cattle walk away from you calmly, they will trust you. Always move in a calm fashion. Locatelli summarized by adding “small steps lead to big successes.” Drawing upon the wisdom of Bud Williams, she added “beg your cattle to work for you.”

About a hundred farmers and ranchers attended the KGA conference. □

near of Galva, utilizing both owned and leased land. They have been expanding their cow-calf program and have developed a strong interest in improving their grasslands and grazing management.

Among some truly valuable “nuggets of knowledge” the Koehns discovered at the workshop were methods for handling and moving cattle in a calm manner, and the concept of a “Bud Box”. Soon after the workshop, Roger and the boys began discussing design ideas for a Bud Box to substitute for a crowding tub and working alley that they had planned to purchase. While Roger was away recently, Jesse and Jake constructed a Bud Box at their headquarters using materials on hand. They put it to use that same day with good results.

The Bud Box is named after Bud Williams who pioneered idea and many of the low-stress handling techniques being used today. It is

basically a smaller pen off the end of a larger sorting alley or pen. After a small group of cattle are moved into the “box”, the gate to the larger area is closed and an adjacent smaller gate is opened, leading through a narrow alley to a squeeze chute or load out. Since cattle instinctively return to the gate where they entered, they find the smaller opening alongside and move in easily that direction.

“The Bud Box is so simple,” says Roger. “The cattle work so much calmer with no stress and walk right into it using the low-stress techniques.” They recently worked 50 head through their new system in less than an hour. “It’s a joy to work our cattle now. We can’t wait to use it again.”

With five pastures located a few miles from their headquarters, having adequate working facilities has been a challenge for the Koehns. They believe the Bud Box and low-stress handling have solved this problem. Using portable panels, they recently erected a temporary pen with a Bud Box at one pasture

*Continued on page 7*



Entrance to the box is the gate with the overhead brace, immediately behind the calf. Roger Koehn's teenage sons built the “Bud Box” with materials on hand one day while he was gone Roger estimates they saved about \$8,000 by using this idea instead of purchasing a crowding tub system.

## WRAPS Workshop Stresses Knowing Your Audience



Clean Water Farm Project farmers (left to right) Brad Windholz, Marquette, Sam Sanders, Hutchinson, Lucinda Stuenkel, Palmer, and Robert Sellers, Florence, participated in a panel providing insight into how organizations, institutions and government agencies might better work with farmers to adopt best management practices at the 2007 Kansas Watershed Restoration and Protection (WRAPS) Conference in mid-January.

Wichita, Ks. - KRC's Clean Water Farm Project staff and four CWFPP farmers joined a broad spectrum of Kansans at the state's annual Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) Conference as it brought speakers and watershed stakeholders to the table in mid-January in Wichita. The purpose of the conference, which was attended by about 200 people, and was sponsored by the WRAPS Work Group and the Governor's Natural Resource Sub-Cabinet, was to

inform and educate on the WRAPS program.

WRAPS is the state's new framework for addressing watershed water quality issues, by involving local citizens in the planning and goal setting process, then involving them in the implementation work.

KRC's Clean Water Farm Project conducted a workshop "Working with Farmers to Implement Best Management Practices", offering insights

### "Bud Box" ...continued from page 6

and worked the cattle smoothly through the arrangement. The same equipment will soon be used at the other four pastures.

"I questioned whether the \$40 for the boys and I to attend the Graziers workshop would be worth it, but it has already paid for itself many times over," Roger stated. He indicated that he saved at least \$8,000 by using

the Bud Box idea instead of purchasing the crowding tub system.

Roger, wife Audrey, Jesse, Jake and younger son Clay display the strong work ethic and family values that has characterized rural America. Roger and Audrey will allow their sons to choose their own direction in life but want to provide them the background and opportunity to become agricultural producers if it is their choice. □

based on their ten years of working with farmers and ranchers.

Among the lessons learned by KRC was that "farmers need to recognize the problem or a threat of a problem before they will take action." This led to the development of the River Friendly Farm Plan (RFFP) environmental assessment to help farmers and ranchers identify problems and develop whole farm plans to address them. Another lesson learned was that "farmer to farmer transfer of information often works better than 'expert' sources."

CWFP Field organizer Dale Kirkham noted that many producers do not adopt changes or new practices because of fear of the cost. "Suggesting management changes before you start talking about big expensive changes or improvements is almost always possible," he said.

Most farmers and ranchers also have something to show and tell-- something that concerns them or something that they have done. "Take time to be a complete listener-- let them reveal their interests and priorities," counseled Dale.

"Often farmers have a reason for why they do things the way they do and for resisting change," Mary Howell, CWFP field organizer stated. "Sometimes they're not sure, except that this is how it has always been done. We try to help them with decisions and sometimes change a mindset or old habits."

Dale summarized his advice on how to work with farmers and ranchers, by stating that "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." □  
MF/CP

## New Priorities Ahead for Farm Bill

by Mary Fund

Topeka, Ks. - "Sharing new priorities for the 2007 farm bill and for agriculture" was the emphasis of testimony at two days of informational hearings held by the House Agriculture Committee of the Kansas Legislature on February 14 and 15.

The first day focused on the 2007 Farm Bill with representatives for the Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Catholic Conference, Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Cattleman's Association, and State SRS office testifying.

Although commodity programs are often deemed the backbone of the Farm Bill, those testifying focused primarily on the need to broaden the farm and food debate and on the potential for programs that enhance rural development, provide for more conservation on working lands, and elevate food and nutrition interests (54% of Farm Bill dollars go for food and nutrition programs). "Bringing in a broader mix of stakeholders to the Farm Bill debate," stated Dan Nagengast, Executive Director of KRC, "is one of KRC's goals."

Scaling back direct farm payments and redirecting commodity program dollars to conservation and rural development programs is one way to reprioritize farm and food policy, according to Paul Johnson, representing Kansas Catholic Conference. "Eighty percent of commodity subsidies go to five crops," he stated, "and those 5 crops represent only 25% of the food supply." Times are changing he argued and we will see increased debate as to why so many dollars are devoted to these five

crops. Questions will be asked about supporting or enhancing fruit and vegetable production as a means to address rising national health issues such as obesity. And taxpayers may argue for redirecting commodity dollars to conservation programs which not only provide public benefits of clean water and air but are WTO friendly.

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### **Legislators seemed intrigued and surprised to learn of the historic horticultural production and the growing consumer interest in locally produced food in Ks.**

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Evidence of the changing playing field in the farm bill was that Candy Shively, SRS testified for the first time ever before the House Agriculture Committee. Candy Shively, SRS, explained how the Food Stamp program works in Kansas. 184,000 people or 80,000 Kansas households are currently served. More people are eligible in Kansas than are enrolled, and SRS is exploring how they can better serve those in need. Participation in rural counties is generally lower than in urban counties.

Kansas Farmers Union spoke to the need for a Competition Title that would help farmers and ranchers address their loss of control in the marketplace. KCA advocated specifically for a state resolution supporting Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) and spoke of the

need for a Livestock Title in the next Farm Bill.

**Building a Local and Regional Food System.** Day two focused on Local Foods in Kansas. Dr. Rhonda Janke, KSU, used USDA Census data and USDA ERS data to show historic fruit and vegetable production in Kansas and the potential for expansion of such production. Looking at only those fruits and vegetables that can be produced in Kansas, Kansas currently produces only about 8.7% of what it needs.

Pete Garfinkel, KSU, presented the historic foundation for such production, and introduced the Kaw River Valley Project as a pilot of how to help producers market such production. Diana Endicott of Good Natured Family Farms described how they built an alliance of 75 farms in Missouri and Kansas to market nearly 30 categories of local products into the Kansas City metro area. "There is huge potential for this kind of marketing," stated Endicott. The challenges of working in a corporate industrial food model are huge as well. Producers need marketing education and assistance and information on regulations.

Legislators seemed intrigued and surprised to learn of the historic horticultural production and the growing consumer interest in locally produced food. Dr. Janke pointed out that we can grow even more crops now than in 1910 (the height of horticultural production in Kansas) because of new technologies.

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## Managing With Less Energy

by Fred Kirschenmann

*Reprinted with permission from the Leopold Letter, Fall 2006(www.leopold.iastate.edu)*

Energy is on everyone's mind and most of our attention is focused on developing alternative energy supplies to replace fossil fuels. This evolution in our thinking is driven by several factors: the recognition that the era of "easy oil" is over; our uneasiness about the political instability in the Middle East where most of the remaining oil reserves exist; and of course, short-term investment opportunities in alternative energy development.

But three critical elements often are overlooked. First, all sources of alternative energy are much less energy efficient than our previous sources of oil and natural gas. Second, future energy use must produce far less greenhouse gases if we want to avoid major climate changes. And third, energy conservation and a more energy-conscious lifestyle must be a part of our future. These are important factors that need to be integrated into energy policy if we want a sustainable future.

Energy efficiency ratios are seldom given full consideration in how we calculate our energy future. In media reports, alternative energy issues usually are framed in terms of switching to "renewable" energy and "weaning ourselves from Mideast oil". The implication is that we simply need to change from oil and natural gas to ethanol, or use nuclear, wind or solar energy, and life can go on pretty much as usual. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

### Days of cheap energy are gone

*Peak Oil* author Richard Heinberg, and Marty Bender who worked in this area at the Land Institute, point out that the days of "cheap energy" are over. In the 1940's when oil and natural gas reached peak discovery levels in the U.S., we were getting 100 kilocalories of energy for every kilocalorie expended to extract oil and natural gas. By the 1970's when we hit peak oil production, the efficiency ratio had dropped to 23 to 1. Today the ratio is somewhere between 8 and 11 to 1.

This drop in energy efficiency is largely responsible for short-term investments in alternative supplies. To mine the oil sands of Alberta, Canada, energy can be extracted at a ratio of 8 to 1, which makes economic sense compared to other energy sources. However, an industrial economy driven by cheap energy - and this would include

modern agriculture - will likely undergo significant changes in the future.

### It cannot be 'business-as-usual'

A second consideration that must be an essential part of any energy policy is the need to dramatically reduce greenhouse gases. The economic and environmental cost of continuing this "business-as-usual" approach will soon be felt throughout the world. As the polar ice caps melt, sea levels will rise, putting major land masses (now occupied by humans) under water. More unstable climates and more severe weather events will make it increasingly difficult to maintain highly specialized monoculture cropping systems. The loss of biodiversity stemming from these severe weather alterations will reduce the resilience of local eco-systems, making it more difficult if not impossible for these systems to be self-regulating and self-renewing.

These emerging energy costs - both economic and ecological - will require that we fundamentally rethink our human economies and the consumptive lifestyles we seem to have taken for granted.

Perhaps one of the greatest fears that makes us reluctant to consider the kind of low-energy lifestyle essential to a sustainable future is that we have indoctrinated to believe that consuming less energy inevitably means a lower quality of life. Several decades ago theologian and philosopher Ivan Illich suggested that a low-energy lifestyle, in fact, would result in a richer lifestyle because of the need for more human and social capital.

Illich argued that societies that opted for a low-energy lifestyle encouraged more diversity and culture, stimulating the development of more supportive communities, which would increase quality of life. On the other hand, societies that opted for a high-energy lifestyle would inevitably lose individual freedoms due to the concentration of power in a technocracy that produced the needed energy.

Today as we already witness the erosion of our rights and democratic freedoms, and see struggles intensify over rising energy costs, we might want to take a fresh look at Illich's proposal. □

*Fred Kirschenmann, a North Dakota farmer, is Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Iowa. For more, go to [www.leopold.iastate.org](http://www.leopold.iastate.org)*

## Cows, Creeks, and Clean Water; Simple Management Changes Matter

by Dale Kirkham



*Cattle access to the creek is common but fencing to limit that access and providing an alternative water source are good water quality protection practices.*



*Unrolling large hay bales in the pasture reduces time spent in confined feeding areas or around bale feeders, and distributes manure across the pasture decreasing threats to water quality.*

Water has been a natural attraction for rural youth during their growing years, especially for boys. What lad living in the country hasn't had a favorite fishing hole, skipped flat rocks across the water, or gone swimming in a nearby creek? Without a lot of worldly cares, who would worry about cows lounging in that creek and what might be in the water besides fish, frogs and crawdads?

Times have changed. Not only are there fewer youth in rural areas, there is widespread concern about the quality of water in our streams and lakes. While the size of operations increase, the number of farmers and ranchers decrease. These farmers and ranchers are expected to protect the natural resources—soil, water, wildlife, air, and native plants. Most are good stewards, realizing that protecting these natural resources is a win-win, benefiting themselves as well as their fellow citizens. Many

ranchers now realize that management practices that minimize the amount of manure and associated nutrients and bacteria in their ponds and streams will improve the health and performance of their livestock. Research has shown that cattle will drink more water that is clean and fresh, thus stay healthy and perform better. Simple management changes like relocating salt and mineral feeders away from water supplies to less used parts of a pasture will reduce the amount of manure, minerals and bacteria entering the livestock water sources.

Unrolling bales of hay distributes manure over the pasture where it can be better utilized before runoff occurs. In the same way, moving winter feeding areas away from streams and ponds and leaving a grass buffer in between will improve water quality and livestock health. Implementing these management practices is a low-cost or even no-cost process. These changes simply

require a change in behavior.

Farmers know that saving the rich topsoil layer is essential to sustaining crop yields for many years. Reducing runoff that carries sediment, minerals, and organic materials into area streams and lakes goes hand-in-hand with maintaining organic matter, minerals and soil tilth that supports crop productivity for the long term. Management practices such as minimum tillage, using legumes in crop rotations, and regular soil tests for nutrient needs all contribute to healthy soils, cleaner runoff and sustained productivity.

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*Continued on page 11*

## CWFP Announces March 31 Cost-Share Deadline

Whiting, Ks. - The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) announces a March 31, 2007 application deadline for cost-share through its Clean Water Farm-River Friendly Farms Project (CWF-RFFP). Farmers and ranchers in high-priority and identified Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) watersheds across Kansas are eligible to apply for financial assistance to implement water quality protection measures on their farms or ranches.

To be eligible for cost-share funds, farmers and ranchers must complete the River Friendly Farm environmental self-assessment (RFFP), a self

assessment tool developed by Kansas State University and KRC. The RFFP helps farmers identify family and farm goals, water quality problems or potential problems, and prioritize a plan of action to solve these problems.

The assessment consists of a notebook with questions to help farmers assess and score the status of soil conservation and the management of nutrients, pests, and livestock waste on the farm, plus the health of the farmstead in terms of waste management and well protection. Upon completion of the assessment,

farmers and ranchers are eligible for a \$250 payment. KRC has four field organizers who assist farmers across the state in completing the assessment, developing an action plan, and applying for cost-share funds up to \$5,000.

Cost share funds can be used to implement water quality improvements including: alternative livestock watering systems; legume-based crop rotations; cover cropping; regular soil testing; grass buffer strips; conversion of cropland to grasses, relocation of winter feeding sites, and adoption of management intensive grazing.

“CWF-RFFP funds can be used in conjunction with federal EQIP dollars and/or State Conservation Commission cost-share programs,” stated Mary Fund, Project Coordinator for KRC. “Pending receipt of funds through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) via U.S. EPA early this spring, our advisory committee will be reviewing applications and making decisions by late April.”

For more information regarding the CWF-RFFP, contact the Kansas Rural Center at 785-873-3431 or by emailing [ksrc@rainbowtel.net](mailto:ksrc@rainbowtel.net).

Please reference the KRC website for a copy of the RFFP assessment, cost-share application, a map of the WRAPS watersheds, and a list of eligible cost-share practices at [www.kansasruralcenter.org/CWF.htm](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/CWF.htm).

The project is funded by U.S. EPA Section 319 funds through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and administered by the Kansas Rural Center. □

### Cows, Creeks and Clean Water...

*Continued from page 10*

Management practices such as minimum tillage, using legumes in crop rotations, and regular soil tests for nutrient needs all contribute to healthy soils, cleaner runoff and sustained productivity.

If it appears that all water quality concerns start and end in fields and pastures, one only needs to look around at urban and suburban home sites, construction sites, golf courses and other areas of human activity. Pet wastes, lawn and garden fertilizers and pesticides, household wastes and other degrading materials are also carried in storm runoff into streams and lakes. Even the oil and transmission fluid that leaks from vehicles onto driveways and parking lots is carried downhill in a storm.

While most people, both rural and urban, are concerned about the future of our natural resources and consider themselves to be good

stewards of the environment, there is always room for improvement. Potential problems are often overlooked, due to lack of awareness or understanding. Through the Clean Water Farms-River Friendly Farm Project (CWF-RFFP), the Kansas Rural Center provides farmers and ranchers an opportunity and an incentive to conduct an environmental assessment of their property.

Using the River Friendly Farm self-assessment notebook, they evaluate the impacts of cows, crops, household cleaners and much more on the quality of water on the land and beyond. (See the article this page on the assessment and available cost-share.)

Look well beyond cows and creeks when looking at water quality. If you would like to learn more about improving water quality on your land, contact the Kansas Rural Center at 785-873-3431, email at [ksrc@rainbowtel.net](mailto:ksrc@rainbowtel.net) or on the web at [www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org). □

# Events and Resources

## Family Farm Management Guides Available

Several short publications designed to help farm families develop successful businesses are available at the Kansas Rural Center's website. These articles include practical tips on how to craft a mission to guide farm planning, run family business meetings, create a management team to fulfill core business functions and chart a long-term path to pass on the family farm.

These publications can be downloaded at <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/publications.html>.

USDA's Risk Management Agency provided resources for the development of these publications. □

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## Grazing Forage Management Teleconference Calls Set

Kansas farmers and ranchers who manage grazing lands can learn about best management practices for Kansas in order to improve both profitability and resource conservation by participating in a series of teleconference calls organized by KSU Extension Specialist Gary Kilgore and KRC's Jerry Jost. Anyone can join the call by dialing 1-888-387-8686. You will be prompted to dial in a Conference Room Number : 4699043 and follow it with the # sign. This is a toll free call.

Selected dates are:  
Monday, March 5, 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
Tuesday, April 3, 7:30 to 9 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 1 7:30 to 9 p.m.  
Topics will be decided with conference call feedback. □

## Eastern Ks. OCIA Annual Meeting Set

The Eastern Kansas Chapter of the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) will hold its annual meeting on Saturday, March 10, at the Netawaka Community Building in Netawaka, Kansas. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and adjourn at 3 p.m. Featured speaker will be Bill Wenzel, Farmer to Farmer Campaign, on Genetically Engineered-Genetically Modified alfalfa, the new ruling, and the impact on organic farmers. Jackie Keller will also report on the 2007 Farm Bill's programs effecting organic agriculture.

There will be a potluck lunch and a business meeting. For more information contact Jackie Keller 785-633-4621, or e-mail [keller7@hotmail.com](mailto:keller7@hotmail.com). □

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## Market Gardening 101 Workshop Announced

The Growing Growers Program announced its schedule of 2007 "Market Gardening 101" workshop. Starting in March, they will be presenting monthly workshop on the basics of market gardening, starting with Soils for Vegetable Producers, Plant Propagation, and Production Planting, and going through until fall, wrapping up with Business Management for Small Farmers. The workshop are open to anyone.

Each workshop involves a structured class, and a farm tour and talk. Saturday March 31, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. is the first workshop. It will cover Soil Building with Organic Practices, and will be held at Pickings 'n' Pumpkins at 17950 W. 223rd in Spring Hill, Ks. Cost is \$30

is registered before March 23.

Monday April 16 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in Kansas City, Kansas with location to be determined. This workshop will focus on Plant Propagation and Production for the vegetable grower.

The complete list of workshops is available at the KRC website [www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org) on our Calendar page, or at the Growing Growers website at [www.growinggrowers.org](http://www.growinggrowers.org). Or call 913-488-1270 for more information. □

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## Farmers Exhibition Planned for March 24

Saturday, March 24 is the date for the 2007 Farmers Exhibition for Kansas City area farmers. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Shawnee Civic Centre at 13817 Johnson Drive in Shawnee, Ks.

The event which allows area farmers within 150 miles of Kansas City to display their wares and make contact with customers is organized by the Kansas City Food Circle and sponsored by the Sierra Club, Kansas City Greens, the Food Circles Networking Project of the Missouri Extension, Growing Growers, and others.

They are looking for additional fruit and vegetable producers to meet area demand, as well as meat and dairy farmers. Farmers need not be certified organic but need to use organic production methods. For meats and dairy, no growth hormones or antibiotics can be used.

For display table information, contact Craig Volland at 913-334-0556; or e-mail [hartwood2@mindspring.com](mailto:hartwood2@mindspring.com). □

# KRC Notes

## KRC Welcomes New Board Members

Manhattan, Ks. - The Kansas Rural Center held its winter board meeting in Manhattan, Kansas, on February 3. Dan Nagengast, Executive Director, expressed appreciation to the out-going or retiring board members for their years of service: Bruce Larkin, Baileyville, Ervin Ediger, Hillsboro, and Jim Rowh, Norton. Thanks for all their input and support!

Elections were held and four current board members accepted another term: Jackie Keller, Topeka, Gary Kilgore, Chanute, Joy and Bob Lominska, Lawrence, and Rodger Schneider, Salina. Newly elected to the board are: Paul Ingle, Topeka, Mark Nightengale, Marienthal, and Laura Fortmeyer, Fairview. (Profiles of new board members will be published in upcoming issues of

Rural Papers.)

The following were elected as KRC board officers for 2007: President, Robert Mulch, Scott City; Vice-President, Harry Bennett, Marion; and Secretary/Treasurer, Jackie Keller, Topeka. Other Executive Committee members appointed are: Rodger Schneider, Salina; Donn Teske, Wheaton; and Herb Bartel, Hillsboro.

Dr. Fred Cholick, Dean of Agriculture at Kansas State University, provided a keynote address on KSU and the status of sustainable agriculture with Research and Extension. An open discussion of ways in which KRC and KSU can work together to enhance sustainable agriculture in Kansas followed Cholick's remarks. □

## KRC Receives Grant for Farm Bill Work

Whiting, Ks. - The Kansas Rural Center has received notification of the approval of a \$15,000 grant from OxFam America to provide outreach, education, and advocacy to farmers and ranchers and food and nutrition interests on the 2007 Farm Bill.

KRC will use the funds to provide information and analysis on farm and food issues to the public, conduct educational meetings, and encourage dialogue their Congressional representatives. □

## Farm Policy

### New Priorities Stressed...

*Continued from page 8*

Nagengast pointed out that parts of the 2007 Farm Bill could influence the growth of local or regional food systems. For instance, reauthorizing the Value Added Producer Grant Program could assist farmer entrepreneurs to develop products, businesses, and market strategies. USDA's 9006 grants can encourage renewable energy development in rural communities. The Farmers Market Nutrition Program can help increase marketing opportunities and thus, increase production of horticultural crops while providing healthy fresh fruits and vegetables to Kansans.

No one argued that a local or regional food system would solve all of

agriculture's problems, but rather that it is an emerging arena with market potential and promising positive health impact.

Overall, testimony recognized the continuing importance of commodity program payments but indicated that there would be debate to shift Farm Bill dollars from those payments to conservation and rural development. But clearly testimony triggered thought and discussion among state legislators about "What can Kansas do to creatively respond to new and emerging food markets?"

Perhaps a Legislative Interim Study on Local Foods in Kansas will be pursued for next summer. □

### Farm Bill Updates and Action Alerts Available

USDA released its 2007 Farm Bill proposal in late January, and farm organizations across the country are issuing their recommendations and responses, including the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and the Farm and Food Policy Project (see page 1) The debate is on and will flow fast and furious over the next few months.

KRC will be issuing periodic Farm Bill Updates and Action Alerts, and posting information on its website. To be added to the e-mail list for receiving Updates and Alerts, contact Mary Fund at [ksrc@rainbowtel.net](mailto:ksrc@rainbowtel.net). □

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## Thank You to the Following Who Made Contributions to the Kansas Rural Center in 2006

*As KRC begins its 28th year of working for a sustainable agriculture and food system, we would like to express our appreciation to the following people for their support! Your gifts, volunteer work, and support are vital to our organization!  
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# Calendar

**Tuesday March 6- Grant Writing Workshop for USDA Section 9006 Energy Program:** Renewable Energy Grants for Small Wind and Other Renewable Energy Projects. Atwood, Ks. 3-5:30 p.m. For more information on the 9006 program go to: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbil](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbil). To register, contact Chris Sramek, 785-626-3640; or e-mail [rced@atwoodtv.net](mailto:rced@atwoodtv.net).

**Saturday, March 10, Eastern Kansas Organic Crop Improvement Association Annual Meeting,** Netawaka, Ks. 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Speaker Bill Wenzel, Farmer to Farmer Campaign on GE- GMO Crops. Contact Jackie Keller 785-633-4621 or [keller7@hotmail.com](mailto:keller7@hotmail.com).

**Friday, March 16- Kansas Wildlife Federation Farm Bill Workshop** 7 p.m. Holiday Inn Express, Dodge City, Ks. Contact Troy Schroeder 785-650-3182 or Steve Sorensen 316-214-3001.

**Saturday March 24, Kansas City Area Farmers Exhibition,** 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Shawnee Civic Center, 13817 Johnson Drive, Shawnee, Kansas. Organized by K.C. Food Circle. To display or for more information, contact Craig Volland 913-334-0556 or e-mail at [hartwood2@mindspring.com](mailto:hartwood2@mindspring.com).

**Saturday March 31, Growing Growers Workshop, "Soil Building with Organic Practices"** at "Pickings n' Pumpkins", 17950 W. 223rd Spring

Hill, Ks. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact Katherine Kelly at 913-499-1270, or go to [www.growinggrowers.org](http://www.growinggrowers.org).

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Please check the KRC website for updated calendar and announcement information at:

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