

**CLAY COUNTY  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT**  
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Clay County Conservation District

July 2016

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## New Sponsor For Milford WRAPS

Since the inception of the Milford Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) program in 2008, the K-State Office of Local Government has been its sponsoring organization. Recently a change was made, with the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams (KAWS) replacing K-State in the sponsor's role.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) developed the WRAPS program to address water quality issues across the state. WRAPS groups are organized using watershed boundaries rather than existing political lines that define counties or other units of government. Using federal Environmental Protection Agency funds and other sources, the WRAPS groups assist landowners with the implementation of best management practices in targeted areas of the watershed to improve water quality.

Two organizations expressed interest in taking on the Milford Lake WRAPS sponsorship, KAWS and the Clay County Conservation District. Rather than choose between the two, the Stakeholder Leadership Team opted to utilize the services of both. KAWS will serve as the project sponsor, handling the grant administration and payments to landowners. The Clay County Conservation District will provide staff to be the boots on the ground in the watershed, coordinating projects and informational activities.

John Bond, who resides near Wakefield, is

the WRAPS Program Director for KAWS and will manage the Milford Lake project.

"KAWS will be partnering with the Clay County Conservation District to coordinate water quality improvement efforts throughout the watershed. We look forward to working with many partners to reduce sediments and nutrients affecting the quality of Milford Lake," Bond said.

Coordinating the Milford WRAPS activities for the Clay County Conservation District will be Tom Meek.

"The problem with harmful algae blooms at Milford Lake is the most significant water quality issue in the watershed," Meek said. "Our efforts will be focused on improving that situation."

The Milford Lake WRAPS area extends from the lake up the Republican River basin as far as Mankato, and includes parts of Clay, Geary, Riley, Washington, Cloud, Republic and Jewell counties.

One of the first priorities for the program will be to reorganize and re-energize the Stakeholder Leadership Team (SLT). With representation from across the watershed, this body sets policy and directs the activities of the WRAPS. Interested residents or landowners in the area are welcome to attend the SLT meetings. Contact John Bond at [jbond@kaws.org](mailto:jbond@kaws.org) or Tom Meek at [tom.meek@ks.nacdnet.net](mailto:tom.meek@ks.nacdnet.net), for information about meeting dates and locations.

## Future Shock

Commentary by Tom Meek

Back in 1970, a book entitled *Future Shock* was on the bestseller lists. The premise of the book was that rapid advances in technology were creating too much change in too short a time period, causing stress and anxiety, or “future shock,” for people trying to cope with an unfamiliar world. “Information overload” was another term that was coined in the book—and that was back in the Dark Ages before Al Gore invented the internet!

Future shock came to mind as I considered changes that have been going on at the USDA Service Center in Clay Center. I wouldn’t say that anyone is disoriented or stressed out around here—at least no more than usual—but the changes have required extra work and time commitments that have pushed other tasks to the back burner. That’s a rather long explanation of why this July newsletter is arriving in your mailbox in September.

The first domino to fall in this flurry of change was the announcement that the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) would be seeking a new sponsoring organization for the Milford Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) program. As detailed on page one, this change presented an opportunity for your conservation district to take on a larger role in the Milford WRAPS. Working out the details of that arrangement with KDHE and the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams required extra time and extra meetings for the district supervisors.

And that knocked over the second domino. With an impending larger work load, the district board moved promptly, yet deliberately, to hire a new district manager. This required still more time and meetings for the district board, but resulted in what we believe will be a fine addition to our staff. Alison Wohler is a Washington County native who attended high school at Linn and received a degree in Agricultural Business from Fort Hays State last spring. By the time you read this, Alison will be on the job at the district manager’s desk.

Alison’s predecessor, yours truly, will have her back, literally and figuratively, as I will move to the desk directly behind Alison, and be available to help orient her to her new job while shifting my responsibilities to the Milford WRAPS. As part of this re-structuring of conservation district positions, Beverly Lang has ended her tenure as the District Secretary. Our thanks go to Beverly for her almost-two years of service to the district.

In the midst of these events, it was announced that Gerald Gray, the District Conservationist here since 2005, would be assuming the Supervisory District Conservationist position in Iola. Gerald started work in the Iola office on August 8th. Ken Bowell, Supervisory District Conservationist for our Clay-Dickinson-Ottawa County management unit, will be the acting District Conservationist here until a replacement for Gerald is named. Ken is stationed in Abilene. Rod Frack, the District Conservationist in Minneapolis, will also be assisting in Clay Center.

One final “shock” to producers and Farm Service Agency staff on the other side of our office has been low wheat prices that have triggered Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP’s), the USDA payments that kick in when local wheat prices fall below the \$3.14 loan rate. It’s been ten years since we were in LDP territory, so we all are learning again how that process works. And with it comes a discouraging outlook for producers, more customer traffic in the service center, and an increased workload for the FSA staff.

That covers the major changes, and honestly, there is nothing so cataclysmic here as to induce any form of future shock. But, give the district board credit for seizing an opportunity to expand the district’s sphere of operation, and devoting the time and effort to put the pieces together in a way that we think will yield benefits into the future. Give the FSA staff credit for handling the additional work that has come with LDP’s. And hey, give me credit for remembering a book that I read way back in 1970. But don’t ask me what I read yesterday—“information overload,” you know...

## We Say Hello...



To Alison Wohler, Conservation District Manager. Alison's background includes FFA at Linn High School, a major in Ag Business and minor in Accounting at Fort Hays State.



To Kate Larson, a Program Technician for the Farm Service Agency. Kate is a Clay County native who has returned to the area after attending Bethel College and residing in Lawrence.



## ...And Good-bye

How do you say good-bye to a cowboy?  
Baxter Black surely knows what to do.  
But I'm more a farmer than rancher  
And really don't have a clue.

Do you say "Adios" and ride into the sunset?  
I'd need a horse to do that.  
Is there some secret handshake or maybe a sign  
That goes with a tip of the hat?

I guess the best bet is to go back a few years  
And borrow some lines from a song  
So happy trails to you, Gerald, 'til we meet again  
Whoopee ti yi yo git along.



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## ARC/PLC Deadline

By William C. Wineinger, FSA Co. Executive Director

Just a few weeks remain for farm operators and owners to complete any needed contract revisions for the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) 2016-year programs. August 1, 2016, was the final date to approve all "initial" contracts, but contract revisions can be completed through the September 30, 2016 deadline. This could accommodate record changes involving crop shares or changes to producer status on the farm (i.e., settlement of Estates, entity changes, etc.). Farm producers should contact the Clay County FSA office if anyone has questions about potential ARC/PLC contract changes.

FSA personnel have been contacting specific producers about potential ARC/PLC contract changes involving crop shares on the 2016 acreages reports versus the payment shares being claimed on the ARC/PLC contracts. One of the requirements of both the ARC and PLC programs is that producers claiming a share of the ARC/PLC payments have control of, and risk in, sufficient "cropland" on the acreage report to support their claimed share of ARC/PLC payments. A new computer report has been developed to make that comparison and FSA personnel are charged with reconciling that report.

In many cases, farms may appear on the report if "double-crop" base acres exist on the farm, but perhaps no acres or fewer acres were double-cropped on such farms in 2016. These cases are exceptions. However, in some cases, usually involving "full-base" farms, we are finding that some base acres have "spilled-over" on acreages still classified as "cropland", but seeded to grass. When we examine the acreage report for the grass, we are finding that the grass is shared differently, and sometimes with different producers, than the acres that were planted to annual crops.

There also may be other situations that cause a farm to be on this comparison report, but we will review each unique situation and explain the ARC/PLC program requirements. If contacted by FSA, we encourage producers to respond promptly so that any required changes can be made before the September 30, 2016 deadline.

Farmers Co-op Elevator Association

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## Bankers' Award Nominees

Nominations for the annual Bankers' Awards are being taken by the Clay County Conservation District. A tradition since 1947, Bankers' Awards recognize farm owners or operators who exemplify the conservation ethic in the management of their farms.

Award categories include soil conservation, windbreaks, wildlife habitat, water quality, water quantity and energy conservation. In addition to these Bankers' Awards, the Conservation District also presents awards for grassland management and a young farmer award.

If you know of a Clay County producer who has done an outstanding job of natural resource stewardship, please submit their name to the Clay County Conservation District so they may be considered for one of these awards. The selection committee will be meeting soon to review nominations.

## Soil Health Workshop

A soil health workshop and cover crop plot tour will be held at Leonardville on October 21st. The event will begin at 9:00 am at Nelson's Landing. Anite Dille and Peter Tomlinson from K-State will speak on weed suppression with cover crops and soil biology. Josh Roe with the Kansas Department of Agriculture will address grazing cover crops.

Following these presentations, a tour of cover crop plots located three miles south of Leonardville on Alemic Road will take place. A wide variety of cover crop species and mixes will be on display.

The Riley County Conservation District is sponsoring the event. Please call Aubrey Evans at 785-537-8764 to make reservations.

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# New “Conservation Client Gateway” From NRCS

Farmers put in long days. Driving to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office every time paperwork needs to be signed is not always productive. With Conservation Client Gateway, a producer can do most of their business with NRCS online. Farmers using Conservation Client Gateway find these three things to be the most advantageous for them.

**Advantage 1**—Sign documents electronically. It is a secure way to sign contracts online. Viewing and printing documents at the farmer's convenience saves time. Plus, everything is logically organized and easy to find. For many farmers that have a long drive to the USDA office, or have multiple projects going on with no time to spare, this feature is a tremendous time saver.

**Advantage 2**—Keep track of payments. Everyone wants to know when they are getting paid. With Conservation Client Gateway, you can get payment status online without the need for a phone call or waiting for a call back.

**Advantage 3**—Request conservation practice certification or technical assistance. Submitting certification online speeds up the process—no need for a special trip to the USDA Service Center. And by asking technical questions online, NRCS is better able to reply with more detailed information that can be read online and available to go back to anytime.

“Many farmers in the surrounding states have really appreciated its time-saving features – use is growing in Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, and Texas. Over 1,700

farmers are using this nationwide. We'd like to see Kansas farmers adopt this to help them get more time back in their day,” says Eric B. Banks, Kansas NRCS State Conservationist. “We have new initiatives underway to get the word out and show how easy Conservation Client Gateway is to use. Farmers can expect to see more demonstrations at partner events and field demonstrations this year. Saving time, being more productive, and most of all convenience—we hope our farmers and ranchers explore the possibilities with this application.”

Learn more about NRCS or find your local field office by visiting the Kansas NRCS Web site ([www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov)). Follow us on Twitter @NRCS\_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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

## On The Calendar

September 29—Clay County 4th Grade Earth Festival at Wakefield

October 13—Milford WRAPS Stakeholders Meeting 11:00 am; Clay County Extension Office

February 6—Annual Meeting of the Clay County Conservation District; 6:30 pm; Clay Center Methodist Church



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# Contests For Youth

The following two contests sponsored by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts are open to Clay County youth. Contact Alison Wohler at the Clay County Conservation District for more information and contest rules at 785-630-3514 or by email at [alison.wohler@ks.nacdnet.net](mailto:alison.wohler@ks.nacdnet.net).

- **Photo Contest**—New this year is a contest for photos that feature conservation practices. Open to participants 18 years old and younger, the state-wide contest carries a \$100 prize for first place. Photos must be taken by September 30 to be eligible.
- **Speech Contest**—High school students can enter the speech contest, which is on the topic of “Local Heroes—Your Hardworking Pollinators.” A cash award of \$1000 awaits the winner of the state contest, with awards also given at the county and area levels.

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