



WESTERN PRAIRIE RC&D QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

WPRC&D

April 2011

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

“AGRITOURISM - Your Next Cash Crop?” Workshop

Full Course:

April 6, 13, 20, 27 & May 4 Wednesdays • 4 – 8:30 p.m. Thomas County Office Complex Colby, Kan.

Cost: \$75 per person

(\$50 for each additional person from the same family or business.)

Includes dinners and the workbook *Self Employment: From Dreams to Reality*

Jan Janzten is the lead instructor who brings a wealth of hands-on experience from owning his own agritourism business. Additional industry experts will also serve as guest instructors. Topics covered during the course include:

- Defining Your Agritourism Business
- Financing Your Dreams
- Pricing Your Product or Service
- Finding, Reaching and Serving Your Customers
- Legal Forms of Business
- Risk Management and Insurance
- Creating Your Agritourism Business Plan
- Legal Liability



Is this for me:

Yes, if you have been thinking about an agritourism, rural tourism or nature-based tourism type of business.

Yes, if you have such a business and wish to expand it.

Yes, if you have or would like to have a business that supports agritourism, rural- or nature-based tourism such as lodging and entertainment or products for sale.

Registration fee covers the five sessions, dinners and your business planning workbook.

Sponsored by: the Kansas Department of Commerce in partnership with the Western Prairie RC&D.

(Registration information can be found on Page 5)

WPRC&D President's Comments:

Spring is just around the corner. Hopefully it will be a time of renewed energy for all of us. RC&D's Nationwide are facing some big challenges regarding their survival due to the budget cuts our Country is facing.

Local Rural Conservation and Development is instrumental in preserving our way of life in our beloved communities. We look around and see our small towns getting smaller, the enrollments less in our local schools, our children leaving our small communities in order to make a living.

The Western Prairie RC&D Council strives to look for avenues to help local communities and organizations be innovative and progressive in order to attract new businesses, industry, and conserve the natural resources we are so lucky to already have. Give our kids a reason and means to come back to the area and raise their own families.

Kansas hosted the SW States RC&D Conference in Dodge City March 13-16 which includes, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri and Kansas. This was a great opportunity to showcase our great State.

We have vacancies on the Council for Thomas County, Sheridan and Logan Counties. If you are interested in learning more about the Council give me at call at 785-899-3070 ext. 3.

Sandy Rodgers

Sandy Rodgers, WPRC&D Area, Inc. President

WPRC&D Area Council

President—Sandra Rodgers, Sherman County Conservation District Rep.

Vice-President—Greg Nemechek, Sherman County Commissioners Rep.

Secretary/ Treasurer—Diana Solko, Decatur County Conservation Rep.

Member—Myra Hyde, Cheyenne County Conservation Rep.

Member—Elmer Kellner, Cheyenne County Commissioners Rep.

Member—Jack Benton, Decatur County Commissioners Rep.

Member—Nick Scott, Logan County Commissioners Rep.

Member—Marlene Erickson, Rawlins County Conservation Rep.

Member—Chris Sramek, Rawlins County Commissioners Rep.

Member—Troy Dewey, Sheridan County Commissioners Rep.

Member—Dean Schemm, Wallace County Conservation District Rep.

Member—Bruce Buck, Wallace County Commissioners Rep.

Alternate Member—Bob Martin, Rawlins County

RC&D STAFF; Duane Cheney, RC&D Coordinator, and Nanette Baumfalk, SER

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Conservation Innovation Grant Program

Overview

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging the Federal investment in environment enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production. Under CIG, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds are used to award competitive grants to non-Federal governmental or non-governmental organizations, federally-recognized Tribes, or individuals. CIG is authorized under EQIP. The Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) administers CIG.

Benefits

CIG enables NRCS to work with other public and private entities and individuals to accelerate technology transfer and adoption of promising technologies and approaches to address some of the Nation's most pressing natural resource concerns. CIG will benefit agricultural producers by providing more options for environmental enhancement and compliance with Federal, State, and local regulations.

How CIG Works

Funding for CIG is announced each year through a funding notice. Funds for single-or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. CIG competitions will emphasize projects that have a goal of providing benefits over a large geographic area. These projects may be watershed based, regional, multi-State, or nationwide in scope.

Applications should describe the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource conservation concern or concerns. The natural resource concerns eligible for funding through CIG will be identified in the funding announcement, and may change annually.

Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice. Evaluated applications will be forwarded to an NRCS Grant Review Board. The Grant Review Board will make recommendations for project approval to the NRCS Chief. Final selections will be made by the Chief. Awards will be made through a grant agreement.

At least 50 percent of the total cost of the project must come from non-Federal matching funds (cash and in-kind contributions) provided by the grantee. The grantee is also responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

In addition to the nationwide grants competition, the State component of CIG is available in select States each year. The State component emphasizes project that have a goal of providing benefits within a limited geographic area. Projects may be farm-based, multi-county, small watershed, or Statewide in scope. Public notices in each Participating State will announce the availability of funds for the State CIG competitions.

Eligibility

CIG applications will be accepted from State or local units of government, Federally-recognized Tribes, Non-governmental organizations, and individuals. Applications will be accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific

Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

Proposed projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers. CIG funds that are used to provide direct or implement structural, vegetative, or management practices are subject to the \$300,000 EQIP payment limitation.

CIG is not a research program. Instead, it is a vehicle to stimulate the adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success. And are likely candidates for eventual technology transfer. CIG will fund projects targeting innovative on-the ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

Technologies and approaches that are commonly used in the geographic area covered by the application, and which are eligible for funding through EQIP, are not eligible for funding through CIG. Proposed projects must conform to the description of innovative conservation projects or activities published in the funding notice.

Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers, and Indian Tribes

NRCS recognizes the need to provide special consideration to historically underserved producers, and strives to ensure that these producers benefit from innovative technologies and approaches. CIG offers two programmatic exceptions intended to encourage the participation of beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers, and Indian Tribes, in CIG. Each year, up to 10 percent of National CIG funds may be set aside for applicants who are beginning or limited resource farmers and ranchers, or Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. The second exception allows applicants from any of the historically underserved to derive a higher percentage of projects matching funds from in-kind contributions.

How to Apply for CIG

Once funds for CIG become available, a funding notice is posted on the federal Grants portal, www.grants.gov.

The funding notice also may be accessed from the NRCS website at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html

The notice will specify the information required from applicants. Complete applications must be submitted to the NRCS National office at the address identified in the notice.

For More Information

If you need more information about CIG, please contact the National CIG Program Manager, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6227-S, Washington, D.C., 20250, telephone: (202) 720-8071, FAX (202) 720-4839.

Additional Information is available on the World Wide Web at : www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html

Note: This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of farm legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementing policies and procedures. Please check back for updates.

Conservation Reserve Program

Celebrates 25 Years



Getting to Scale with Regional Food Hubs

By Jim Barham, Food Hub Team Leader,

Agricultural Marketing Service

Here at USDA we are looking for ways that we can help build and strengthen regional and local food systems. As we talk to farmers, producers, consumers, processors, retailers, buyers and everyone else involved in regional food system development, we hear more and more about small and midsized farmers struggling to get their products to market quickly and efficiently. And more and more we hear that these same producers need access to things like trucks, warehouses, processing space, and storage. These things require capital investment, infrastructure maintenance and dedicated oversight—things that small and mid-sized producers often can't afford or manage themselves.

One answer to help regional producers may be a “food hub.” Our working definition of a food hub is “a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products”. By actively coordinating these activities along the value chain, food hubs are providing wider access to institutional and retail markets for

small to mid-sized producers, and increasing access of fresh healthy food for consumers. Including underserved areas and food deserts.

One Example is La Montanita in New Mexico, which buys from over 700 local farmers and producers, and warehouses and processes over 1,100 local products that are sold through the La Montanita retail co-op locations and other retail markets across the state.

There's also Appalachian Sustainable Development, which offers technical support, training and marketing support to over 50 local farmers, and aggregates their products for regional distribution across rural Appalachia.

And the Detroit Eastern Market is a food hub, offering warehouse, storage, processing, marketing and retail functions to hundreds of Michigan producers, allowing them to participate in the state's biggest market.

In order to better understand the impacts of these projects and how we can further support local and regional food hubs, we have created a dedicated working group composed of representatives from the Agricultural Marketing Service, Rural Development, Economic Research Service, Agricultural Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Food Nutrition Service.

We're also working closely with other groups, such as The Wallace Center-at Winrock International, the Project for Public Spaces, and the National Association of Produce Market Managers, to understand the critical role food hubs can play in regional food systems. As interest, market demand, and production of local and regional food continue to grow, so will the need for organized infrastructure systems, like processing, aggregation, distribution and marketing. Food hubs are one way to get ahead of the curve.

Adrian J. Polansky, state executive director of USDA's farm Service Agency (FSA) in Kansas announces the 25th anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which has protected our nation's natural resources since the signing of the historic Food Security Act of 1985. The act provided for the establishment of CRP and for the protection of highly erodible land.

“CRP has a 25-year legacy of successfully protecting the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation,” said Polansky, “Although it was designed to address soil erosion, CRP has become one of the standouts in the USDA arsenal of conservation programs by continuing to provide significant economic and environmental benefits beyond its original intent.”

CRP was introduced at a time when soil erosion exceeded more than 3 billion tons per year, wetlands were being drained, water quality was deteriorating and wildlife populations were under stress due to the loss of habitat. CRP provided solutions to all of these problems. Since its inception, the national program has helped reduce soil erosion by 622 million tons, provided natural habitats for wildlife, restored more than 2 million acres of wetlands and removed millions of tons of carbon dioxide from the air.

CRP, which is administered by FSA, is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural landowners to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. Landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term conservation practices on eligible farmland. To date, the total national CRP stands at 31.3 million acres enrolled in nearly 738,000 contracts. Here in Kansas, there are 2,163,643.2 acres enrolled in 47,263 contracts.

FSA Announces a CRP General

Signup Period

Manhattan, Kansas, February 4, 2011— Adrian J. Polansky, State Executive Director of USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), announced a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup March 14, 2011. This is the second consecutive year that USDA has offered a general CRP signup.

“Financial incentive available through CRP affords farmers and ranchers a low risk opportunity to implement a variety of conservation practices that will benefit the environment in a number of ways,” said Polansky. “Over the past 25 years, CRP Practices have improved water and air quality, increased wildlife habitat and prevented soil erosion.”

Landowners enrolled in the CRP program receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Land that is not currently enrolled in CRP can be offered during sign-up if all eligibility requirements are met. CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall can make new contract offers during the signup period. Contracts awarded during this general signup will become effective October 1, 2011.

CRP is authorized a maximum enrollment of 32 million acres. Nationwide there is currently 30,859,317 acres enrolled on 730,547 contracts with an estimated 5,040,883 acres to expire this fall. Kansas currently has 2,726,425 acres enrolled on 46,641 contracts with an estimated 532,067 acres expiring September 30, 2011.

All CRP offers are evaluated and ranked using an Environment Benefits Index (EBI) that indicates the environmental benefits of enrolling land in CRP. There are five environmental factors that make up the EBI: wildlife, water, soil, air, enduring benefits and cost. Decisions will be made following the end of the sign-up and after analyzing EBI data on all of the offers.

In addition to the general sign-up, the continuous CRP sign-up program will be ongoing.

For more information, please contact the FSA Office at the local USDA Service Center or visit

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

Success Finds the 2nd Annual Kansas Market Place

The 2nd annual Kansas Market Place was a huge success, and we already can't wait for next year! With 215 registered attendees, 30 exhibitors and 66 speakers, attendees had abundant opportunities to absorb information and make connections.

“I don't feel like I am alone in rural America anymore. Kansas Market Place was a great networking opportunity, and I hope it continues to grow,” said Mary McCune, speaker and founder of Motorcycle Mary, Inc. McCune, a presenter at Market Place, said she already has next November

15th and 16th, booked on her calendar for the 3rd annual Market Place in Salina, Kansas.

With the reins being handed over to the Kansas Department of Commerce for the 2011 Kansas Market Place, we are now in the planning stages of helping to bring Market Place to South Dakota. Keep your eyes and ears open for updates in the coming months!

To stay connected with us throughout the year, search with the phrase “Kansas Market Place” on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Geocaching is a term—coined in 2000—that describes the enthusiast hobby of locating a treasure somewhere in the world with the help of a GPS-enabled device and GPS coordinates that are listed online.

Geocaching combines location-based gaming, social networking, treasure hunting, GPS navigation, and outdoor recreation. The hobby was started in 2000 by a GPS enthusiast, Dave Ulmer, seeking to test the accuracy of the improved GPS signal available to civilians. Ulmer shared the coordinates of his first hidden geocache online. Mike Teague found this geocache and shared his experience online. The online chats spread, and soon, 75 other caches were hidden around the world. One was found in July by Jeremy Irish, who shortly thereafter, founded Geocaching.com as the first portal for the hobby.

Dozens of free articles and millions of online conversations later, Geocaching.com is the world's largest location-based gaming portal.

Today, more than 1.4 million geocaches have been hidden, and found by more than 4 million people worldwide. More specifically, the United States and Germany lead the world in this activity, with the Czech Republic, Canada and the United Kingdom following.

Geocaching continues to grow in popularity across the United States from California and Texas to New York and Florida. Some of the cities with the highest geocaching activity (based on visits to the Geocaching.com website include Seattle, New York, Los Angeles and Phoenix..

The Rules of Geocaching

1. If you take something from the cache, leave something of equal or greater value.
2. Write about your find in the cache logbook.
3. Log your experience at www.geocaching.com

The Contents of a Geocache

A geocache always contains a logbook or logsheet for finders to sign.

Dates to Remember

April 6, 13, 20, 27 – Northwest Kansas Agritourism Course Workshop, Colby, KS

April 14 - WPRC&D Area, Inc. Council Meeting, Colby, KS

April 21, May 19, June 16 - NW Kansas Conservation and Environment Alliance Meetings.

April 27 - Kids Conservation Roundup

May 4 - Northwest Kansas Agritourism Course Workshop, Colby, KS

May 7-8: Kansas Sampler Festival, Ray Miller Park, Leavenworth, KS

May 12 – WPRC&D Area, Inc. Council Meeting, Colby, KS

May 19 - Cheyenne County RC&D Advisory Meeting

June 9 – WPRC&D Area, Inc. Council Meeting, Colby, KS

September 18-20, 2011 - Kansas State Association for RC&D Councils Annual Convention, Prairie Museum of Art and History, 1905 S. Franklin, Colby, KS

Larger geocaches may also contain items for trade. These are generally small trinkets. If someone takes an item, he should leave something of equal or greater value in its place for the next geocacher to find.

A geocache may also contain Trackable items. Trackables are geocaching "game pieces" bearing a tracking number—a unique series of letters and numbers—that allows geocachers to follow the items' real-world travels on Geocaching.com Some of the most popular trackable item are "Geocoins" and Travel Bugs".

Geocache Types

Traditional Cache

This is the original cache type consisting, at a minimum, a container and a logbook. Normally you'll find a Tupperware container or ammo box filled with goodies, or a smaller container ("micro cache") that contains only a logsheet. The coordinates listed on the traditional cache page are the exact location for the cache.

Multi-Cache

A multi-cache ("multiple") involves two or more locations, the final location being a physical container. There are many variations, but most multi-caches have a hint at the first location that helps one reach the second location, where there is a hint to the third, and so on.

Mystery or Puzzle Caches

The "catch all" of cache types, this form of cache can involve complicated puzzles geocachers will first need to solve to determine the coordinates. Due to the increasing creativity of geocaching, this becomes the staging ground for new and unique challenges.

Event Cache

Occasionally. Local geocachers and geocaching organizations designate a time and location to meet and discuss geocaching. After the event, the caches are archived.

Mega-Event Cache

A Mega-Event cache must be attended by more than 500 people. Typically, Mega-Events are annual events and attract geocachers from all over the world.

Cache In Trash Out Event

While on a cache hunt, geocachers collect litter along the trails and properly dispose of it. Cache In Trash Out events are much larger clean-up events that involve and benefit the larger community.

GPS

Adventures Maze Exhibit

A GPS Adventures Exhibit Cache represents attendance at the GPS Adventures Maze Exhibit or a regional variation of this Exhibit. GPS Adventures Maze are designed to teach people of all ages about GPS technology and geocaching through interactive science experiences.

Projects A.P.E. Cache

In 2001, fourteen geocaches were placed in conjunction with 20th Century Fox to support the movie Planet of the Apes. Each cache represented a fictional story in which scientists revealed an Alternative Primate Evolution. These caches were made using specially marked ammo containers. Each cache had an original prop from the movie. Only a few Project A.P.E caches exist today.

Letterbox Hybrid

A letterbox is another form of treasure hunting using clues instead of coordinates.

Geocaching.com Community

Becoming part of the Geocaching.com Community is a simple task. To be part of this growing online Community, individuals have two membership options—Basic or Premium.

A Basic Membership on Geocaching.com is free, and requires only a valid email address to create an account. A Premium Membership is \$30 per year, or \$10 for 3 months, and provides access to additional website features and functionality that will help individuals get the most out of their geocaching experiences.

For More information on geocaching, go to www.geocaching.com

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:**“Agri– tourism Course”**

Farmers, business owners and entrepreneurs interested in becoming part of the growing agritourism industry are encouraged to participate in courses sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce Rural Development Division in partnership with the Western Prairie Resource Conservation & Development. The five-part courses will be held in April and May in Colby .

The classes will provide an overview of agritourism, including how rural enterprises can start a new agritourism business or incorporate agritourism into an existing business. Topics to be covered include defining an agritourism business; financing; pricing a product or service; finding customers; and insurance and legal issues. Jan Janzten, owner of Kansas Flint Hills Adventures, will serve as lead instructor. Free information sessions will be held prior to the start of each course.

WHAT: Agritourism business development courses sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce Rural Development Division.

WHEN/WHERE: In Colby, the course will be offered from 4-8:30 p.m. April 6, 13, 20, 27 and May 4 (Wednesdays). Location for classes and information session will be the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave., Colby, Kan. 67701.

COST: Registration fee for the course is \$75 for the first participant, \$50 for each additional participant from the same business or family.

REGISTRATION: Register online or download a registration form at kansasagritourism.com.

MORE INFORMATION: Contact Becki Rhoades, Kansas Department of Commerce, at (785) 296-1847 or brhoades@kansascommerce.com.

Western Prairie RC&D Area, Inc. Council to Receive Funds

Western Prairie RC&D Council will receive funding from USDA for projects that meet the USDA and NRCS goals in fiscal years 2011 and 2012. The Council has set these funds to complete projects as:

Agriculture Sustainable Workshop

NW Kansas Agritourism Workshops

NW Kansas Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Workshops

Kids Conservation Roundup Day Camp

Plans are to complete the Agriculture Sustainable Workshop in fiscal year 2011 and the remaining in fiscal year 2012. Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Workshops will occur from November 2011 to March 2012. Agritourism workshops and the Kids Conservation Roundup will occur in April 2012.

Please check with our future quarterly newsletters for the upcoming workshops or call our office for more information at 785-462-7671 Ext. 5 or email duane.cheney@ks.usda.gov

USDA Online Tool to Connect Retiring and Beginning Farmers

A new website will display advertisements to link retiring farmers with expiring Conservation Reserve Program contracts to beginning farmers or ranchers interested in bringing the land into production. A Transition Incentives Program— with \$25 million available— provides up to two additional rental payments to the retiring landowner.

TIP provides up to two additional Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) annual rental payments to a retired or retiring landowner or operator with an expiring CRP contract.

To qualify, the landowner must sell or lease the CRP land to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher so the new operator can convert some or all of the land to production using sustainable grazing or crop production methods. The new farmer or rancher is required to operate under a conservation plan approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The program has taken off remarkably well with good participation levels, but how to effectively connect beginners with landowners who have land in CRP has been a lurking question. Most local folks have an idea who owns CRP land around their community. But that's not always the case, and it's increasingly challenging if you are looking for land outside your local area.

To aid in that process, US Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced a new online tool called TIP Net. It will link retiring farmers with expiring CRP contracts to beginning farmers or ranchers who are interested in bringing the land into production.

The TIP Net website is provided by the Farm Service Agency. Through the Transition Incentives Program, producers with land for sale or lease are introduced to qualified beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who want to buy or rent land for their operations. You can access TIP Net through FSA's website, www.fsa.usda.gov.

The online tool works like this:

- All users who want to post an ad online must complete a one-time registration process. (If you only want to view ads from beginning farmers or from retiring farmers, you don't need to register).
- To register, create an account through an eAuthentication link. You provide a user name, password, name and email address. Just follow the instructions on the website. Be sure to save your username and password. You'll use it each time to access the website.
- You will receive an email from eAuthHelpDesk to activate your account. You just click on the link in the email that says ACTIVATE MY ACCOUNT.
- It will work best if ads are kept current and folks remember to remove ads they no longer need.

CRP TIP has \$25 million available to help transition CRP land to beginners and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. As of November 30, 2010, there have been 372 contracts on more than 52,000 acres for nearly \$5 million in payments.

For more information, contact our Farm Bill Helpline by calling 402-687-2100 or email Traci Bruckner at tracib@fra.org.

Kansas Department of Commerce Value-added Loan Program

The Agriculture Value-added Loan Program provides financial support for the creation and expansion of producer-based alliances and value-added businesses. Dollars from the program may be used by agricultural producers and entrepreneurs for such things as business planning, product development, marketing and product sourcing. Loan applications will be reviewed looking for a “big picture” or long-term approach to the project. Successful applications will demonstrate significant investment on the part of the applicant, as well as an approach that encourages sustainability of the business.

All loans offer two (2) years interest free financing, with an interest rate at 1% over Kansas City prime interest rate after the two year interest-free period. The interest rate is locked in at the time the contract is signed and an amortized schedule for repayment is provided. Quarterly reporting on the Value-added project is required. Applicants are eligible for no more than two (2) loans within a four (4) year period and are limited to one loan per fiscal year (exception given for feasibility study loans). Commerce will take first lien position on any assets purchased with loan proceeds.

The deadline for submitting applications is May 25th. All applications received after that date will be considered in the following fiscal year (July 1-June 30), with loan proceeds available after **July 25th**.

Three competitive loan programs are available for ag producers:

- **Agritourism Attraction Development Loans.**
- **Diversified Farm and Specialty Production Loans**
- **Standard Agriculture Value-added Loans**
- **Agritourism Attraction Development Loans**

The Agritourism Attraction Development Loan Program is designed to assist new and existing agritourism operators to further expand their business operations. Agritourism attracts tourists who participate in activities on a working farm, ranch, winery or any agricultural operation or active agricultural heritage site. These activities may include outdoor recreation, activities, education, shopping, dining or lodging and help generate income for the Kansas operators. This

helps sustain the rural way of life and keep more producers on our Kansas lands. Applicants must be registered with the Kansas Department of Commerce as an Agritourism Operation.

Although Commerce is encouraging creativity of projects, demonstrating the major limiting factors to the growth of the business is a key consideration

Diversified Farm and Specialty Production Loans

The Diversified Farm and Specialty Production Loan Program assists Kansas agriculture producers to wholly or partially transition to non-traditional crops or livestock as a means to diversify the farm. Non-traditional crops or livestock are defined as those not currently tracked by the Kansas Agriculture Statistics Service (KASS). Projects cannot be an expansion of an existing operation. Applicants must demonstrate that the project will generate additional revenue streams for the farm operation.

Standard Agriculture Value-added Loans

The Agriculture Value-added Loan Program is designed to assist agriculture producers in Kansas with any Value-added venture not qualifying for either the Agritourism Attraction Development Loan Program or the Diversified Farm and Specialty Production Loan Program. “Value-added agriculture” simply defined, is a process of increasing the economic value and consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity. Three types of loans, detailed below, are available through this program.

- Marketing Development Funds may be used for market research, feasibility studies (** See requirements below) or to facilitate entry into a market.
- Bridge Loans are used for a short duration of time until permanent financing is in place. The loans allow the investor to pursue timely real estate acquisitions or business opportunities, as well as to provide opportunity to pursue start-up funds.
- Commercialization Funds are provided for projects that involve actual processing, equipment, physical structures and gap financing.

What if the business fails?

Loans are made under the understanding that the project will likely commercialize, but in the case of a failed project, loan funds may be forgiven if the reporting requirements are current and the loan funds were utilized ac-

ording to Contract. Commerce may choose to exercise their right to a security interest depending on contract terms, which in the case of a feasibility study, would be the work product itself or, in the case of a loan, would be the collateral pledged.

Need more details?

To begin the process, or for more information of questions, contact the division: (785) 296-3737 or agprod@kansascommerce.com.

Simply Kansas.....”simply quality”

Simply Kansas is a trademark program designed to promote agricultural experiences and products grown, raised or produced in Kansas. The program offers Kansas producers a variety of resources, including:

- *Marketing and technical assistance*
- *Inclusion in the Simply Kansas online product directory*
- *Permission to use the Simply Kansas logo on packaging and marketing materials*
- *Educational opportunities designed for business owners and entrepreneurs*
- *Opportunities to be featured on SimplyKansas.com*
- *Promotion of Simply Kansas products at Kansas Department of Commerce events*
- *Eligibility for the Business Enhancement Grant for marketing and consulting fees*
- *Receipt of the quarterly Simply Kansas newsletter*
- *Ability to purchase Simply Kansas point-of-purchase materials*
- *Opportunity to list company events on the Simply Kansas calendar of events*

When you buy an authentic Kansas-made product or purchase a Kansas agritourism experience, you’re buying quality. But you’re also supporting the Kansas farmers, food processors and entrepreneurs who are vital to our economy and our heritage. That’s what Simply Kansas is all about: providing you quality Kansas products and experiences and supporting the Kansans who produce them.

Applicants

All Kansas producers can apply for membership in the program, provided at least 75 percent of their item’s ingredients or processes are Kansas-based. Applications will be reviewed by a panel of Simply Kansas judges, and there is a \$25 annual membership fee.

For more information, visit www.simplykansas.com today.

Making a great product is hard work. But finding one is simple. Simply Kansas.



Community Involvement Spurs New Ideas

“ How do we get people involved in our town?” So many of our communities and organizations are suffering from “STP” (same ten people) syndrome. It not only wears them out, we also miss the new people and ideas that can make a real difference.

So how do you get people involved? The best way to get someone involved is to ask them—directly and personally. People get involved because they want to meet new people or get to know them better, to have fun, to work on an interest they have. And connect to some higher purpose. But the main reason they get involved is they are asked.

I talked about the success Muriel Krusemark had in Hoffman, Minnesota, a town of 672 (October 2010 newsletter). She is not shy about getting people involved. As her 16 new families moved into Hoffman over the last two years, she welcomed them with a gift basket and asked what they bring to the community and how they might use those skills to better Hoffman. Muriel made sure they got to use those skills.

Help someone recognize their importance. People are more likely to become involved if they realize how important their involvement is and they have something to offer. Ask them what they want to do, and let them use their skills.

Seriously consider expanding your sphere of volunteers. Can you partner with your neighboring community on something? Building a cross-community action team can help address the real challenge of finding enough people to become involved.

Finally let go. People often don't get involved because the “STP” won't let go of the way things have always been done. Getting people involved does not just mean you've found another person to re-stack the chairs after the meeting, it also means you are developing a new leader.

Listen to their ideas and support their efforts. Give them room to fail, assistance when they do, and demonstrate enough confidence in them that they can try again. Soon, you'll have so many volunteers you'll be hard-pressed to use the “STP” gang at all! Contact: Kathie Starkweather, kathies@cfra.org or 402-438-8496 for more information.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Rawlins County HTC YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR & SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FAIR!



Set the date aside and plan on joining us for this informative and timely workshop. This will be a great educational opportunity, in conjunction with the Rawlins County HTC Entrepreneur Fair, where all of the speakers and presenters are involved in sustainable agriculture practices.

The wide range of topics covered will introduce your students and community to current opportunities,

trends and practices that are part of **a new emerging agriculture.**

Who: FFA Students and Northwest Kansas entrepreneurs interested in the latest practices in sustainable agriculture.....

When: Friday, April 1st from 12:30 – 4:00PM following morning Youth Entrepreneur Fair at Rawlins County High School Gym

Where: Rawlins County 4-H Building, N. Hwy 25, Atwood, KS

Some of the topics that will be covered are:

- High Tunnels— Building, Growing and Marketing
- Community Gardens – Raised Beds
- On-line Marketing Local Food – High Plains Food Co-op
- Aquaponics Developing Sustainable Food Systems



COST: FFA programs FREE

General admission \$5

For additional information or to register contact **Chris Sramek (785) 626-8066** chris@decisionweather.com or **Kurt Dillon (785) 626-0078** kdillon@usd105.org

Kansas Range Youth Camp

July 5th– July 8th, 2011

If **YOU** are interested in plants, livestock, or wild life, attend an educational event like no other in Kansas!

Participants: Upcoming High School Sophomores, Juniors, & Seniors

Location: Camp Mennoscah, Murdock, Ks

Learn: Range Plant Identification, Plant Growth, Stocking Rate Determination, Livestock Nutrition, Rangeland Wildlife Management , and much more!

Special Items: Field Trip (location to be determined) Steak and Potato Dinner

Air-Conditioned Cabins

Free Time Activities: Swimming, Canoeing, Fishing, & Hiking

Tuition: \$220 per participant

Educating Kansas Youth

For over 50 Years!

* Interested students should contact their local conservation district, extension office, farm bureau office, livestock association, and/or other local business for possible financial assistance.

Contact: Alex Miller, Kansas Range Youth Camp Chairman, by April 29th, 2011 for registration. 501 State Street, Westmoreland, KS 66549— Phone (785) 457-3661 ext 3 Alex.Miller.ks.usda.gov

Kansas Sampler Festival

The 2011 Kansas Sampler Festival
May 7 & 8, 2011– Ray Miller Park, 4201 South 4th St.
Leavenworth

The Kansas Sampler Festival had a record attendance of 8,500 on May 1&2, 2010 and will return to Leavenworth just in time to celebrate the state’s Sesquicentennial! Join us in Leavenworth County in 2011.

Liberal has been chosen to host the 2012– 2013 festival. Congratulations! For more information log onto:

<http://www.cityofliberal.com/>

Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (Opening Ceremonies, 9 a.m. Sun., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Admission: \$5 Adults; \$3 Children (7-4); under 6 Admitted free

For more information contact Keyta Kelly, festival director at 913-417-7575 or kssamplerfestlvco@sunflower.com

WHAT IS THE KANSAS SAMPLER FESTIVAL

The Kansas Sampler is like a living brochure of Kansas! In 2010, over 150 communities provided a sample of what there is to see, do, hear, taste, buy and learn in Kansas!

The Kansas Sampler Festival was designed to bring Communities and attractions from all over the state together to make it easy for the public to discover day trip possibilities. In other words, the primary purpose of the festival is to provide the public a sample of what there is to see and do in Kansas. Whether you are looking for hiking trails, historic sites, natural landmarks, unique restaurants, off-the-beaten track eateries, architectural gems, hole-in-wall performing centers, artists-at-work, specialty shops, or have-to-be-there Kansas events, this festival is for you!

HISTORY OF THE EVENT

In 1990, Mil and Marci Penner had a book signing party for their first Kansas guidebook, Kansas Weekend Guide. They invited places in the book to come help support the purpose of the book which was to inspire travel throughout Kansas. These attractions filled one big tent. It was a cold November day with rain turning into snow but still a thousand people came to the farm. The event became the Kansas Sampler in 1991 and was held until 1997 on the Penner farm near Inman. In 1993 the Festival became a project of the newly formed Kansas Sampler Foundation.

It was decided to take the festival on the road starting in 1998 to expose more people to the festival exhibitors. After a bid process, Pratt was chosen to host the event in 1998 and 1999. Ottawa hosted the festival in 2000 and 2001. Independence was host for the festival in 2002 and 2003, and Newton was the host in 2004 and 2005. Garden City was the host for 2006 and 2007 followed by Concordia in 2008 and 2009. Leavenworth will host the festival in 2010 and 2011. The new host for 2012 and 2013 is Liberal located in Southwest Kansas.

FESTIVAL FEATURES;

- Over 150 Kansas communities tell what they have to see and do;
- Dozens of entrepreneurs sell their Kansas-made products
- Cultural heritage demonstrations and displays;
- Kansas entertainers perform, sell CD’s and showcase for future bookings.
- Historical performers provide a sampling of many character;
- Kansas Wineries and Microbreweries provide taste testing;
- Kansas questions are asked at The Stump, prizes given;
- Food booths tell the Kansas story through their menu

Kansas Receives FRPP Funds

Salina, KS, January 28, 2011 - “Kansas Natural Resources conservation Services (NRCS) has received \$1.2 million for the farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011,” announced Eric B. Banks, State Conservationist for NRCS in Kansas.

“FRPP provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranch lands in agricultural uses,” explained Banks. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funds too state, tribal, or local governments and non-governments and non-governmental organization (eligible entities) to acquire conservation easements from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement and the eligible entities are responsible for the rest.

Proposals can be submitted by the eligible intities to the Kansas NRCS State Office on a continuous basis throughout the year.

All proposals submitted to the Kansas NRCS State Office prior to April 8, 2011, will be reviewed for funding consideration,” states Banks. “The individual farms and ranches are evaluated and ranked individually and funds are obligated to the eligible entities associated with the highest farms and ranches (Continue to page 9)

The Home Depot Launches CFL Recycling Program

On June 24, 2008, The Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement retailer, expanded its long-term commitment to the environment and sustainability by launching a national in-store, consumer compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb recycling Program in all 1,969 The Home Depot locations. This free service is the first such offering made so widely available by a retailer in the United States and offers customers additional options for making environmentally conscious decisions from purchase to disposal. As of October 1, 2008 all stores will be equipped with an eye catching, orange CFL unit to collect bulbs for free recycling.

At each The Home Depot store, customers can simply bring in any expired, unbroken CFL bulbs, place them in a plastic bag and deposit them both into a collection unit. The bulbs will then be managed responsibly by an environmental management company who will coordinate CFL packaging, transportation and recycling to maximize safety and ensure environmental compliance. Customers will be able to locate the CFL receptacle on the front end of the store near the entrance, by the Returns desk or near the exit doors inside the store.

In addition to CFL recycling program, The Home Depot's has also launched an instore energy conservation program to switch Light Fixture Showrooms in U. S. stores from incandescent bulbs to CFLs by Fall 2008 and save \$16 million annually in energy costs.

The CFL bulbs recycling program is an extension of The Home Depot's Eco Options program. Eco Options, launched in April 2007, is a classification that allows customers to easily identify products that have less of an impact on the environment. "The CFL recycling program is another example of how The Home Depot is empowering customers to help make a difference in their own homes, and have less of an impact on the environment," said Ron Jarvis, senior vice president, Environmental innovation. "With, more than 75 percent of households located within 10 miles of a Home Depot store, this program is the first national solution to providing Americans with a convenient way to recycle CFLs."

Switching from traditional light bulbs to CFLs is an easy change consumers can make to reduce energy use at home. According to the EPA's ENERGY STAR program, if every American switched out one incandescent bulb to CFL, it would prevent more than 600 million in annual energy costs and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions from 800,000 cars. As the largest retailer of light bulbs in the country, The Home Depot sold over 75 million CFL's in 2007, which saved Americans approximately \$4.8 billion in energy costs and 51.8 billion pounds in CO₂ greenhouse gases over the life of the bulbs.

(FRPP - Continued from page 8)

Through a cooperative agreement."

"To qualify, the land must have 50 percent prime, unique, or important farmland soils; have a historic or archeological resource; or have land that supports the policy of a state or local farm and ranch lands protection program," explains Banks.

The land must also be part of a pending offer from a local state, tribe, or non-governmental organization farmland protection program; be privately owned; have a conservation plan for highly erodible land; be large enough to sustain agricultural production; be accessible to markets for what the land produces; have adequate infrastructure and agricultural support services; and have surrounding parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

Landowners interested in protecting their land from development so it remains in agricultural production will need to work with an eligible entity to receive funding assistance through the FRPP. Eligible entities in Kansas are non-governmental land trusts and organizations that are qualified to acquire and manage conservation easements within the state. In FY 2010, NRCS provided \$81,943 in matching funds to enroll 5,561 acres in the FRPP.

For more information regarding the FRPP, go to www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/ or call the NRCS State Office at 785-823-4500. NRCS is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Kansas Profile— Now That's Rural Steve Radley— NetWork Kansas

By Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

E=mc². That was the famous equation proposed by Albert Einstein. While the E in that equation stood for energy, today's society has other important E-words, such as entrepreneurs. In fact, we might say that E=Entrepreneurship. There is increasing appreciation of the importance of entrepreneurship in growing our economies and communities. Now, an organization named NetWork Kansas has created a system for supporting and enhancing entrepreneurship in communities across the state.

Steve Radley is director of the Kansas Center for Entrepreneurship which operates under the name of NetWork Kansas. Steve is a native of Wichita who grew up in Oklahoma and has degrees from Wichita State and OU. He began his private sector career with a business startup technology company in Wichita, where he helped the founding entrepreneur grow the business from a \$6 million company to more than \$175 million. Steve co-owned two other businesses after that.

In 2004, the state legislature passed the Kansas Economic Growth Act which, among other things, created the Kansas Center for Entrepreneurship. Steve became the center's first director in 2005. That organization, now known as NetWork Kansas, is intended to assist entrepreneurs in the state. It opened with a call center and website to provide prospective business startups with information and referrals to partnering organizations. This initiative began with 250 partnering organization in March 2006.

Now NetWork Kansas has some 470 partnering organizations. In the summer of 2006, NetWork Kansas held 18 town hall meetings in 45 days around the state, seeking input on how to do more to assist entrepreneurs. One outcome of this process was that NetWork Kansas launched a Start-up Kansas fund to assist small business growth. This is a statewide matching loan fund for entrepreneurial projects submitted through partnering organizations.

"As I wrote the town report, I visualized a community with three bridges: Experience, Economics, and Education," Steve Radley said. "Each bridge had those resources moving both ways. We need to truly empower those communities with assets and decision making."

This led to the creation of what NetWork Kansas calls E-Communities. A NetWork Kansas E-Community is a partnership that allows a town, a cluster of towns, or an entire county to raise seed money for local entrepreneurs through donations from individuals or businesses within the community. These funds are raised using Kansas Entrepreneurship Tax Credit allocations and are then distributed in the form of matching loans and grants to new and expanding businesses through a competitive application process administered by a local leadership team.

Essentially, this enables a donor to the entrepreneurship fund to receive a credit on their state income tax. Then the funds are used to grow local businesses. NetWork Kansas selects five to eight new E-communities each year. This service is intended to reach out to the whole state, not only to the big cities.

Twenty-four E-communities have been selected so far in every region of the state. From Greeley County to Linn County. More than half are county wide. The list of individual towns selected includes small-to mid-size communities but does not include Kansas City, Topeka, or Wichita. In fact, it includes rural places such as Bird City, population 472, and Alden, population 165 people. Now, that's rural.

Altogether, more than \$4.5 million dollars has been raised to provide matching loans and grants to local businesses. Based on current loans and grants funded, it is estimated that these funds will help generate more than \$35 million of investment in rural businesses across Kansas.

"Our goal is to help communities grow their own money and make their own decisions," Radley said. For more information, <http://www.networkkans.com>.

E=mc². That was Albert Einstein's famous equation. But in this case, E equals Entrepreneurship. We commend Steve Radley and all those involved with NetWork Kansas and the E-communities for making a difference by targeting and supporting entrepreneurs. If E equals Entrepreneurship and "mc" stands for My Community, that makes for a powerful equation to benefit rural Kansas.

Western Prairie RC&D Area, Inc.
 915 East Walnut
 Suite 3
 Colby, KS 67701

Non-profit
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 Colby, KS 67701

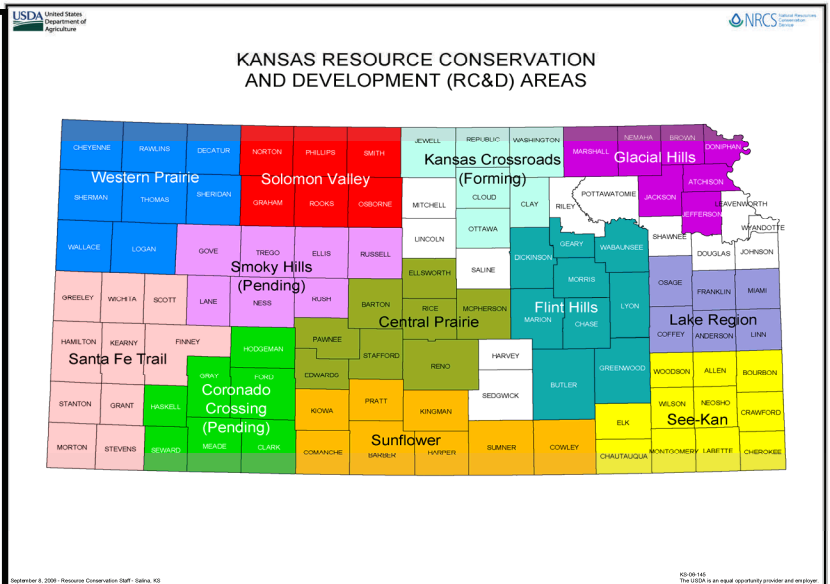


Quarterly Newsletter

Western Prairie RC&D Area Council Meetings held at 915 East Walnut, Colby, KS (Begins at 6:30 PM CT) :

- April 14, 2011**
- May 12, 2011**
- June 9, 2011**
- July 14, 2011**
- August 11, 2011**
- September 8, 2011**

September 18-20, 2011 - Kansas State Association for RC&D Councils Annual Convention, Prairie Museum of Art and History, 1905 S. Franklin, Colby, KS



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