

# Steps taken to protect landowners

Governor Sam Brownback recently outlined the next steps he will take to protect Kansas landowners and businesses from the negative effects of the Lesser Prairie Chicken's listing as a threatened species.

Joined by Jackie McClaskey, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture and J. Michael Vess, Chairman and managing owner of Vess Oil Corporation, Governor Brownback called on the Obama administration to take several actions, including suspending current regulatory actions pending review of all plans that might be available to Kansans.

"The federal government is operating at cross purposes with itself," said Governor Brownback. "On one hand, the Department of the Agriculture has re-

duced its Conservation Reserve Program by 25 percent since 2008 diminishing the range of the chicken and then United States Fish & Wildlife lists the bird as 'threatened,' based at least in part on circumstances the government itself created."

Among the steps the Governor announced today were a formal request to Sally Jewel, Secretary of the Interior and Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture to suspend current regulatory actions until all proposed plans are reviewed and considered so Kansans may make a choice of the plan that best meets their needs; to recognize the important role drought has played historically in the ebb and flow of the Lesser Prairie Chicken population; and to address current program opportunities available through

the Conservation Range Program or Environmental Quality Incentives Program to show good faith that recovery of the species is the mission.

Kansas also is expanding its participation in the Oklahoma law suit asking for an injunction to give Kansans time to consider all their options, including those plans that remain in the pipeline for governmental approval.

"The listing of the Lesser Prairie Chicken is just one more example of the federal government disregarding state's rights," said Governor Brownback. "We will protect the rights of Kansas landowners and businesses. We can do that and protect the Lesser Prairie Chicken at the same time."

# Emergency loans available now

Farmers in Norton and Decatur Counties, who suffered crop or livestock losses due to drought occurring April 1, 2014 and continuing may now apply for Farm Service Agency emergency loans, Farm Service Agency Farm Loan Manager, Randal R. Thiel, said today.

Norton and Decatur Counties became eligible under existing legislation which provides that farmers in counties bordering on those which have been designated for disaster assistance may also qualify for such assistance. Applications for assistance will be accepted by Farm Service Agency until Jan. 28, 2015.

Loans covering physical and/or production losses are scheduled for repayment as rapidly as feasible, consistent with the applicant's reasonable ability to pay, said Thiel. The current interest rate is 3.25 percent but is subject to monthly changes until the loan is approved.

Loan Programs staff is committed to new and existing customers, Farm Service Agency customer goals and our rural communities. Farm Service Agency's service extends beyond the typical loan, offering Farm Service Agency customers ongoing consultation, advice and creative ways to make your farm business thrive. At the Farm Service Agency, we want to be your lender of first opportunity to overcome these adverse weather conditions and rebuild your operation to get back on track. Farm Service Agency's loan staff can refer customers to other public and commercial financing sources that can serve as a blend with Farm Service Agency's farm loan programs.

Farm Service Agency loans covering physical losses may be used to replace installations, equipment, livestock, or buildings (including homes), lost through this disaster.

Farm Service Agency loans

covering production losses may be used to buy feed, seed, fertilizer, livestock, or to make payments on real estate and chattel debts. Funds can also be used for other essential operating and living expenses, Thiel said.

To be eligible for an emergency disaster loan, an applicant must be operating a family size farm or ranch, must be unable to get credit elsewhere, and must have suffered a qualifying physical and/or production loss from the disaster.

Farmers who suffered at least a 30 percent reduction to at least one cropping enterprise, may have a qualifying production loss. Emergency disaster production loss loans cover 100 percent of qualifying losses.

Farmers and ranchers that think they may be eligible should contact the Farm Service Agency County Office in Norton, Kan. or call 785-877-5156 for additional information and how to apply.

# Crash, Bang, Boom



The Norton Youth Benefit Derby was held Saturday at Norton Elmwood Park Speedway. Over \$6,000 was taken in and all proceeds from the demolition derby will be donated to Norton youth organizations, according to Jamie Amlong, promoter. It's been nearly two decades since Norton hosted a demolition derby and an estimated crowd of 1,000 people came out to watch. There were 37 cars and four pickups in the derby. The winner was Jesse Martin of Stockton, second place went to Shane Rippen of Culbertson, Neb., and finishing third was Dusty Eagleburger of Norton.

—Telegram photo by Mike Stephens

# Hard work is a sure fire solution

By Ron Wilson  
Huck Boyd Institute

The population estimates are in. Census Bureau data show the most recent estimates of population change in Kansas counties, with a pattern of urban growth and rural population loss — except for a few counties which have bucked the trend. For example, the northernmost tier of counties in Kansas all demonstrated population loss, with one exception: Rawlins County. Why is this so? At least one source of the population growth in Rawlins County has been the advent of a private sector, entrepreneurial agribusiness enterprise.

Matt Wolters is a co-founder of Surefire Ag Systems in Rawlins County, the site of unexpected growth. Matt grew up here at Atwood, studied agricultural economics at Kansas State University and came back to northwest Kansas. He went to work for another company but saw an opportunity in the fertilizer industry.

Matt contacted his brother Josh who had been an engineer with larger companies but was ready to leave the big corporate structure. They partnered with their friend Blaine Ginther. Their idea was to create a system of equipment that could attach to a farmer's existing farm implements and be used to dispense liquid fertilizer.

The three went to work. They set out to create a company to produce such a product and found they had complementary skills. Josh Wolters is an engineer and Blaine Ginther had worked in management and sales, while Matt specialized in operations and strategic man-

agement.

The three entrepreneurs launched a company known as Surefire Ag Systems. The purpose of the company was to deliver customized equipment for application of crop inputs. They began the business in August 2007 on a farmstead north of their hometown of Atwood.

"The foundation of our business is configuring a package of components to make a system that attaches to existing equipment to apply liquid fertilizer, chemicals, or herbicides," Matt said.

For example, adding their system to a corn planter makes it possible to apply fertilizer also. "Our system can be customized to each specific piece of equipment," Matt said.

Surefire Ag got started at the time that GPS guidance and tractor autosteer systems were really growing in popularity. Being able to integrate the Surefire Ag systems with those technologies was a key to success. Surefire Ag experienced significant growth and continued to innovate.

"By God's guiding hand, we hired our first electrical engineer in 2011," Matt said. This highly-trained engineer, originally from Hoxie, happened to be moving back to the area when he and his wife decided they wanted to raise their kids here. He joined SureFire and his skills enabled the company to do more product development. SureFire Electronics was launched in 2012 and SureFire's QuickDraw system was introduced in 2013. QuickDraw is an automated, electronically controlled spray tender system which automates batch mixing

of crop inputs. The company continues to grow.

"One of our objectives is to be an economic engine for Rawlins County," Matt said. The company now employs 35 people and has sold products to 47 states, six Canadian provinces and beyond. Such market breadth is remarkable for a young company from rural Atwood, population 1,258 people. Now, that's rural.

In addition to generating employment, the company created the Dream Big Education Foundation to support Rawlins County schools. SureFire made a \$100,000 donation which has been used to put smart boards and iPad carts in the grade schools and significantly upgraded the information technology infrastructure in the high school.

"Our people are our greatest asset," Matt said. "We've been blessed with the most dedicated, committed group of people who have come together to make it happen. They grew up with a work ethic and the moral compass to take care of people."

For more information about the company, go to [www.surefireag.com](http://www.surefireag.com).

The population estimates are in. Of all the northern tier of counties in Kansas, the only one to experience population gain is Rawlins County, home of SureFire Ag Systems. We salute Matt Wolters, Josh and Lisa Wolters, Blaine and Erin Ginther and all those involved with SureFire Ag for making a difference with agricultural entrepreneurship and dedicated effort. In rural Kansas, hard work is the only surefire solution.

# CLUB NEWS

This is Norton Rotary's first appearance in "Club News"! (At least from what I'm aware of). We, at Norton Rotary, have so much going on, and we thought that putting our notes in the newspaper from each of our business meetings would be a fantastic way of spreading the word. We hold a business meeting the first Monday of every month, but we actually meet every Monday at noon at Town & Country. We welcome anyone and everyone to come to our meetings to listen to our programs and even join! Now on to June's Business Meeting Notes...

Norton Rotary held its business meeting on June 2. The financial report was shared first and there was some discussion regarding some funds that have been set up. Because of the money having been donated, we will talk with those who made the contribution about utilizing the funds.

Jeff Elliott then gave a report on the Norton Rotary BB Gun

team. They had a successful fundraiser and are still raising money for their trip to Nationals in Arkansas. The club also discussed having a sendoff for the BB Gun team when they leave July 3 at 7:30 a.m. We will do some checking regarding this and will set it at our next meeting.

Next, we discussed our Rotary District's Grant Program. We will be checking into submitting a grant for the calibration and continual update to Norton School's iMachine that was originally bought through our rotary club. Another idea for grant money has been possibly helping put a digital sign at the junction of highways 36 and 283 for advertising purposes and directing traffic to the downtown area.

Next, the club discussed promotion and how to spread the word about Rotary and our community projects. Norton Telegram Club News and other outlets were discussed. We also

have a Norton Rotary Facebook page. Membership was also discussed as there are a few new people interested in becoming members, and we talked of a few others to ask. Anyone who is interested about membership can contact: Maggie Basgall — [mabasgall@nex-tech.com](mailto:mabasgall@nex-tech.com) or message us on Facebook.

We then took a look at new business. Rotary will be taking tickets at the drag races on July 12 and have set our soup supper dates for fundraisers for our yearly senior scholarships: Friday, Jan. 16; Friday, Feb. 13, and Tuesday, Feb. 24.

Lastly, we are looking into new ideas for a food drive for God's Pantry. We used to do "pack the pickup" at Moonlight Madness but after that has changed, we have had difficulty finding a new venue. If anyone has any ideas, please let us know.

Next Rotary business meeting is July 7.

# COLLEGE NOTES

## 2014 Ag Valley Co-op Scholarship Winners

There were 40 students in surrounding areas in Kansas and Nebraska that won the Ag Valley Co-op Scholarship.

## Norton Community High School

Marisa Maddy  
Travis Cressler  
Kolton Harting  
Bailey Ambrosier

Austin Hager  
Cody O'Hare  
Cole Renner  
Christopher Chambers

In order to be on the Dean's Honor Roll list at Pratt Community College a student must

be full time students, taking at least 12 credit hours and must have between a 3.99 and a 3.5

grade point average.  
Tyler Goscha, Logan, KS  
Jordan Hartwell, Norton, KS

Bianna Karnopp, a 2013 Norton Community High School graduate and a Johnson County Community College transfer student, won the drawing for a

\$400 Fort Hays State University Student Recognition Program Scholarship at this year's Student Recognition Program in Overland Park.

Karnopp, daughter of Kelly and April Karnopp, Norton, plans to major in English education.

Jessie Thalheim of Long Island, Kan., qualified for the spring 2014 president's list at Chadron State College.

The president's list requires a grade-point average of 4.0 on a scale of 4.0. Students must be enrolled in 12 credit hours of

coursework during the semester to qualify.

Southwestern College held Commencement exercises May 4, in Winfield. The ceremony was preceded by receptions for

graduates and their families, and the Order of the Mound honorary society induction which represents the top 10 percent aca-

demically.  
Roselin Lee, Jennings, earned a bachelor of science degree in security management.

Sunday, June 15, 2014

## Happy Father's Day

**This Friday is Father's Day at the First State Bank, Norton!**

We're Celebrating Early and Invite All Fathers to Visit Our Bank

# FRIDAY, JUNE 13

to receive a free gift and enjoy coffee, tea and cookies from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in our lobby

Member F.D.I.C.

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