State agencies join forces to conserve water, forests

Water and forest resources in the mid to upper for qualifying for projects. High Plains have faced ever-increasing risk for more than a century, and they're now facing serious problems for the future.

That's why the state forestry agencies in Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas have joined together to form a partnership with the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service to generate money to support

Startup money for the partnership comes from a grant under a conservation initiative outlined in the 2008 Farm Bill. The partners hope, however, to bring another \$800,000 to the area over the next four years to bolster landowners' efforts in planting trees along streams, renovate windbreaks and improve

"The official name of our funding source is the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative," said Bob Atchison, rural forestry coordinator for the Kansas Forest Service. "Kansans won't need to remember that, though, because the Kansas Forest Service and NRCS are funneling their efforts through a program that already exists.'

Kansans will continue to apply for cost-share money through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for Forestland Health, Atchison said.

This program already provides more than \$100,000 each year for Kansas projects, he said. With the state's current share of the new partnership fund, more than \$300,000 will be available next year.

"County NRCS offices can take landowner applications at any time," he said, "but the application cutoff date for fiscal 2011 funds is November 15. That's really soon. Landowners who can get in before that deadline, however, may have better odds

"After you apply, the process will go like this: The NRCS will refer you to a Kansas Forest Service district forester. That forester will schedule a site visit and develop a management plan to help guide your project. Then the NRCS will rank and prioritize all of the year's applications, based on criteria specifically developed for forestland health."

The program attempts to cover 75 percent of project costs, as determined by statewide averages.

"Forests, windbreaks, croplands and grasslands could all have areas eligible for projects, so long as they have a 'resource concern,'" Atchison said. "Our partnership's primary interests are the health and condition of trees in windbreaks, woodlands and forests. We're also concerned about stream-bank soil erosion and the water quality issues associated with excessive sediment."

Problems could range from old windbreaks with gaps and dead trees to overcrowded forests and woodlands, he said, especially those with lots of invasive or undesirable trees. Woodlands and stream banks that could benefit from additional tree plantings also may qualify.

The Kansas Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy released this year shows that:

• Nearly half of the state's 43,436 miles of windbreaks are in poor condition.

• 46 percent of Kansas woodlands and forests classify as "cull," having no marketable value.

 Sedimentation from stream-bank erosion has reduced the storage capacity and thus the lifespan of many Kansas reservoirs by 50 to 100 years, creating a real potential for water-supply shortages.

Best time for soil test is fall

Fall can be better than spring

The weather in spring is more likely to leave soils waterlogged and difficult to sample. Plus, effectively. Kansas State Universispring has evolved into the traditional time to test both farm and garden soils. Typically, soil testing labs are at their busiest and the turnaround time for results is the slowest of the year.

As a bonus, if test results suggest soil needs more organic material, fall provides a bounty of free options. Including somewhat fresh materials is possible, too, because landscape plants are no longer young and/or spring-tender. Incorporating such materials into the soil subjects them to winter's freeze-thaw cycles - one of the best ways to turn crushed or mowed organics into compost in a matter of months.

Every land-grant university's statewide system of Extension offices can help farmers and homeowners learn how to sample soil ty Research and Extension offices often have soil samplers available for checkout, too, and they can forward samples for testing in K-State's lab for a small fee.

Each sample should have soil from the surface to about 6 to 8 inches deep. One way to collect it is to use a shovel, dig straight down, and then shave a small layer off the back of the hole.

To limit testing costs, soil gathered from several locations in field, garden or yard should go into the same clean plastic container for mixing. A cup to 1.5 cups of that mix, placed in a resealable plastic bag, will be the representative sample to submit.

Soil tests typically determine pH and fertility. Those factors, in turn, reflect the kinds of inputs soil does or does not need. K-State's lab often finds, for example, that homeowners need to make soil more acidic to grow rhododendrons. They will need to fertilize their lawn with nitrogen, but may already have more than enough potassium and phosphorus.

On the Beat

COLBY POLICE

12:35 a.m. - Driving while suspended report filed on traffic stop at Garfield and Fourth. Butch's towed vehicle.

3:03 a.m. - Welfare check on clerk at Holiday Inn.

4:44 a.m. - Security check at Walmart.

11:08 a.m. - Dog at large at

Fourth and Range not found. 12:12 p.m. - Hit-and-run accident at 166 E. Hill sometime

Wednesday. 1:16 p.m. – Civil standby.

1:40 p.m. – Caller reported truck parked on grass on his property at 900 E. Fourth. Vehicle was being moved, all OK.

2:05 p.m. - Clerk reported man complaining about Housing Authority; left westbound on W. Sixth. Not found.

2:27 p.m. - Clerk at Oasis called about possible check fraud.

2:39 p.m. – Employee at 100 S. Range reported possible lottery

scam. Spoke to subjects. 4:07 p.m. – Hit and run accident at Colby High School.

7:12 p.m. - Out-of-town neighbor's front door wide open at 1170 S. Franklin. Everything OK.

11:36 p.m. - Welfare check on clerk at Sleep Inn.

THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF **Thursday**

12:54 p.m. – Insufficient funds check: report filed on Amber S. Baxter-Shellito.

2:44 p.m. - Report of child not in a child safety seat, vehicle last seen leaving north alleyway in the 700 block of W. Webster. Not

7:36 p.m. – Brought Mackenzie Shields from Decatur County to

Thomas County. 8:06 p.m. - Mackenzie Alan Shields arrested on warrant.

9:57 p.m. – Semi-trailer truck stopped with trailer in the ditch on K-25 just south of mile 206. Vehicle had been moved.

County committee voting is under way

trator Jonathan Coppess says 2010 county committee elections began Friday with the U.S. Department of Agriculture mailing ballots to eligible voters.

The deadline to return the ballots to your county office is Mon-

'All eligible farmers and ranchers can make a difference by voting in this year's county committee elections," said Coppess. "County committee members will provide input and make important decisions on the local administration of new disaster and conservation programs under the 2008 Farm Bill.

"I particularly encourage minority and women producers to get involved so that county committees fairly represent all produc-

County committee members provide a link between the agricultural community and the department, he said. Farmers and ranchers elected to these com-

Farm Service Agency Adminis- mittees make decisions on commodity price-support loans and payments, conservation programs, incentive indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities, emergency programs and payment eligibility.

To vote, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in a Farm Service program. Farmers and ranchers nominated candidates this summer.

Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot this week can get one from their county office. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 6. Committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1.

Close to 7,900 county committee members serve 2,244 Farm Service offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 members who serve three-year terms.

For information, go to www.fsa. usda.gov/elections, or stop by the county office at 915 E. Walnut, Colby, or call (785) 462-7671.

Loans to help farmers

The U.S. Department of Agri- for installation of conservation culture's new Conservation Loan structures, establishment of forest program give farmers money to cover, installation of water conserimplement practices that will conserve natural resources.

"This provides an opportunity for farmers to obtain assistance with the expense to implement conservation measures on their lands, especially limited-resource farmers," said Adrian J. Polansky, state executive director of the Farm Service Agency. "In return, these producers will help to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and promote sustainable and organic agricultural practices."

Conservation loans can be used or go to www.fsa.usda.gov.

NEW SYSTEM

vation measures, establishment or improvement of permanent pastures, implementation of manure management and the adaptation of other emerging or existing conservation practices.

Direct loans can be obtained through Farm Service offices up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans up to \$1,112,000 are available from lenders working with the agency.

For information, contact the agency's county office at 915 E. Walnut, Colby, (785) 462-7671,

Consumers advised to always refrigerate all pumpkin pies

The U.S. pumpkin crop has been plentiful this year, so sales should offer chances to buy pumpkin for breads, rolls and muffins, cakes and pies, said Karen Blakeslee, Kansas State University Extension food scientist.

And, while a traditional Thanksgiving dinner might seem incomplete without a pumpkin pie, consumers may question why pumpkin pies can be stored on a grocer's shelf when the general food safety recommendation for antimicrobials, Blakeslee said.

pumpkin pies requires refrigeration, Blakeslee

Custard-style pies are made with eggs and milk, ingredients with a high moisture content, and when stored at room temperature attract bacterial growth, the food scientist said.

To qualify for display at room temperature, commercial recipes must be made with shelfstable ingredients such as preservatives and

Labels on shelf-stable pies include "RT," which means the product meets guidelines for storage at room temperature, and "sell by" or "use by" dates, Blakeslee said.

Once purchased and taken home, the pies fare best if refrigerated before and after cutting, said Blakeslee.

Information about holiday food safety is available online at: www.ksre.ksu.edu/humannutrition/ and www.rrc.ksu.edu/.

To have your ad placed in the Business Directory call Andrea or Kathryn today at 462-3963.

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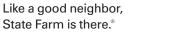




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