Windbreak not looking its best after storm

By Doug Stephens
The Goodland Daily News

This year's Soil Conservation Windbreak award went to life-long Goodland residents Bryan and Cinda Hatcher, who live just over a mile west of town on Eighth Street Road.

While they are proud of their windbreak, they say they're not pleased with the way the trees look now.

"They just don't look too good right now," Cinda said. "The trees caught a lot of the dirt and snow which blew through here recently. They usually look better.

"We wanted to wash them off before anybody took pictures of them, but the hoses wouldn't reach."

They weren't expecting to get the award.

"It was kind of a surprise," Bryan said.

When they first moved into their house in 1976, they said there was only a small windbreak of red cedars on the west side of the house.

"We knew from the windbreak on my parents' farm that red cedars will break down under snow," Cinda said, "so we ended up taking them down."

They put up the over 100 trees in 1976, including four rows of Rocky Mountain Junipers and one row of Austrian Pines. They said they got the trees from the soil conservation district. Since planting the trees, they said they have only lost one.

Bryan and Cinda Hatcher, winners of this year's Windbreak award, stood in front of their Rocky Mountain Junipers.
Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

"We've been awfully lucky," Cinda said.

"One reason they have lived so well," she said, "is that we put in a drip system."

The Hatchers said they put in the system when the trees were planted. The plastic tubing emits about a gallon a month. They have to manually turn on the hydrant once a month now that the trees are grown, and more often when they were younger.

"It helps a lot," Cinda said. She said her parents had to haul water out to their windbreak in buckets.

"That would have been just too much work," Bryan said.

They said the windbreak has been a blessing.

"We hardly ever get snowdrifts around our house," Cinda said.

"We really knew it was working one year when Goodland got 20 inches of snow," she said. "We always head out to my parents' for snowstorms, and when we got back, the town was a mess, but we had no snow drifts at all. We knew it had really worked."

The Hatchers' trees are placed a little differently than a traditional windbreak, they said. The rows are spaced a little further apart. They said they learned from Cinda's parents, who farmed about five miles west of Goodland, that if the rows are spaced too closely together, snow will come over the first row and will come down and break the second. With the spacing, the snow can settle between the rows.

"We have had some broken branches," Bryan said, "but not too many."

There is a space of 100-150 feet between two groupings of rows, which Bryan says

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Root plowing helps farm

By Robert A. Bergquist
Biologist

Root plowing can be beneficial both to the landowner and to wildlife. The way you manage hedgerows and the trees along streams will determine if you are doing a conservation practice or having a problem now or in the future.

Trees along field edges can take moisture away from several rows of crops. It is especially noticeable in dry years. But trees along fields can have beneficial functions as well. They reduce wind speeds that dry out the ground.

This action can increase crop yields and the benefits will extend out into the field for up to 10 times the height of the trees. Trees will also produce an even covering of snow over a field in winter instead of the snow all being blown off. This practice can add significant soil moisture and nutrients to the crop fields.

Fortunately, there is a way to keep the trees and eliminate the problem of the trees removing moisture from the edge of the crop field. Using a root plow is an effective way to accomplish the task. Root plowing is done with a deep shank ripper or chisel at a depth of 20 to 30 inches. This operation should be parallel to the hedgerow or tree line and out into the field about 15 to 20 feet. Just be sure that you can cultivate over the root plow line in case any tree sprouts come up from the roots.

The ripper blade must be large enough to sever the lateral root system of the trees and may need to be done in two passes. Care should be taken not to cut buried cables or pipelines so call 1-800-DIG-SAFE before you begin.

Crop yield data in fields next to root-plowed hedgerows have shown up to a 40 percent increase in yields along the field edge that can be affected up to 75 feet from the trees. The roots usually grow back at a rate of 1 to 1 1/2 feet per year so it should be several years before root plowing needs to be done again.

Root plowing has shown no effect on the growth and health of the trees receiving the treatment.

Root plowing will provide you better crop yields adjacent to tree lines, as well as retaining moisture in the soil. This management action can save your hedgerow, save you money, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Root plows are available from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, as well as from some local conservation districts.

For further assistance on this excellent management alternative, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service located at your local county USDA Service Center or the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks office.

For more information visit the Kansas NRCS web site at HYPERLINK http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov.-

Winners liked the look of pines

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helps protect his trees from damage. They didn't have a lot of room, he said, so the break curves to protect the east side of the house.

They got their trees through the soil conservation district, which helped them choose the right trees.

Not every decision was strictly scientific, though.

"We put in the pines because we just liked the looks of them," Bryan said.

Aside from the large windbreak to catch winds and snow, the Hatchers have a small line of small trees in front. They catch hot winds in the summer, they say, and help keep the house cool. These trees are replacements from the originals. They had to get replacements when the first trees were infested with bores.

"They're not as big as we would like them to be by now," Cinda said, "but we are glad to have them."

The Hatchers praise the value of windbreaks.

"They are definitely worth the money and the time to put them on farmsteads, Bryan said, "and they have had the livability they have because of the drip system."

Maybe the biggest fan of the windbreak is Taz, the Hatcher's German shepherd, which spends a lot of time in the trees.

"That dog likes to hunt in the trees," Bryan said. "There are probably trails down there where he has chased rabbits, squirrels, and whatever else gets in there."

The Hatchers farm corn, wheat, alfalfa, pinto beans and various other small crops on 1,600 acres.

They said they are worried about what the dry winter will do to their crops, but they are even more worried about their 85 head of cattle.

"We need some snow or rain, or we won't have any pasture," Cinda said, "but we have a couple of more months, so we're not panicking yet."

Cinda says she's been involved in farming since she was a child, helping her late father on the family farm.

"Farming kind of grows on you," she said.

The couple has two grown children, Wesley, who goes to Baker College at Baldwin City, and Mandy, who goes to Kansas State University. Bryan said they don't expect their children to move back to Goodland after they finish college the way he and his wife did.

"Wes comes home during the summer breaks," Cinda said, "but that won't last."

Monitoring shows sediment is biggest stream pollutant

Water quality monitoring has shown that sediment is the most prevalent pollutant in Kansas streams. Sediment is inorganic particles carried and deposited by moving water. These particles can range in size from fine silts and clays to boulders. Normally, sediment is classified as being one of two types, suspended or bedload.

Suspended sediments are normally fine silts and clay particles, which are carried in suspension by flowing water. This suspended sediment is what makes streams appear turbid or muddy.

Bedload sediment is the coarser, heavier material, which is moved along the streambed. Bedload sediment usually rolls or bounces along the streambed, moving within two or three inches of the streambed.

Although no data presently exists on how much sediment any particular stream can transport without causing problems, much is known about the detrimental effects of too much sediment in streams. A great deal of study has been conducted on the impacts of sediment on aquatic organisms. In gravel bed streams, too much fine sediment can cover mussel beds, fish eggs, and aquatic insects causing them to suffocate. Excess sediment also can also fill ponds and stream channels creating maintenance problems for landowners and local highway departments.

Sediment is considered a non-point source pollutant. This means that sediment has many sources instead of just one. Sediment can be derived from construction sites, farm fields and even lawns and pastures. A growing number of experts believe that a large percentage of stream sediment is derived from eroding streambanks. Sites like these can contribute thousands of tons of sediment to a stream in a short period of time.

In fact, streambank erosion on the left site was responsible for contributing 231,000 tons of sediment over a period of 17 months. Research conducted in Kansas is showing that a great deal of nutrients, such as nitrate, ammonia, phosphorous and potassium is contained in the soil eroding from the streambanks. Many of these nutrients contribute to excessive stream algae growth, which can also be detrimental to aquatic organisms.

Most people are not concerned about streambank erosion until it threatens their property. In some situations, that may be too late. Rural landowners not only loose valuable farmland to eroding streambanks, but they also loose all future crop production from land that moves downstream as sediment.

Several state, local and federal agencies are working together to assist landowners reduce streambank erosion. Many advances have been made in streambank stabilization techniques in recent years. Modern methods of dealing with streambank erosion focus on working with a stream's natural tendencies rather than against them. Current stabilization projects focus on re-establishment of riparian vegetation along with stopping erosion along the streambank.

New methods of streambank stabilization utilize structures that re-direct water currents away from the streambank. This results in reduced water velocities near the streambank and allows vegetation to become established easier. These re-directive methods are much more economical than traditional streambank stabilization techniques. Vertical streambanks are normally reshaped to flatter slopes, which are then planted to native grasses, shrubs and trees.

Tree species, which require high soil moisture content and that can tolerate flooding are the best choice for planting on the lower areas of the shaped streambanks. These tree species include willow, cottonwood and sycamore. Grass species, which are commonly used in the riparian area, include reed-canary, switch grass and prairie cord grass.

Dormant stakes are cut from sections of trees or tree limbs, which are then planted as un-rooted cuttings. Live stakes do not have roots, and are normally driven into the soil rather than by using a shovel or spade.

Trees come in many species

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The other bundles are the wildlife and wildlife mast bundles for $78 and $92 respectively. The Wildlife Bundle has five bur oaks and 25 each of American plum, fragrant sumac, rough-leafed dogwood, golden currant and eastern red cedar. The Wildlife Mast Bundle has 50 bur oak, 25 black walnut, 25 sawtooth oak and 25 chinkapin oak seedlings.

The 28 species of shrubs, deciduous trees and evergreens are for use as windbreaks, woodlots, wildlife habitat, Christmas trees and for control of water and wind erosion.

Species available range from seven varieties of shrubs, including choke cherry, fragrant sumac, lilac and Sand Hill plum, to 14 varieties of deciduous trees, including baldcypress, bur oak, hackberry and northern red oak, to evergreens, including Oriental arborvitae, ponderosa pine and eastern white pine.

Trees come in bare-root bundles of 50 seedlings each for $28 per bundle or container grown as well in units of 30 trees each for $41. Three evergreen varieties (Austrian pine, Ponderosa pine and eastern red cedar) are offered.

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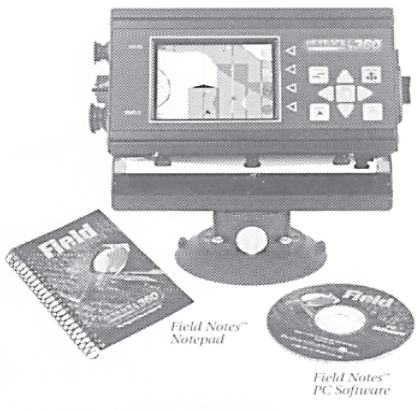

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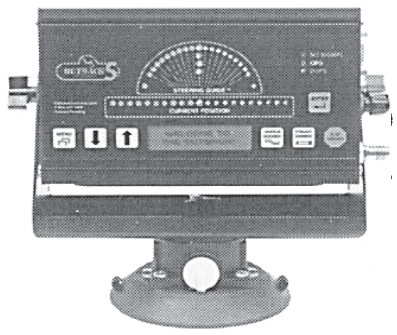

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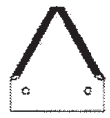

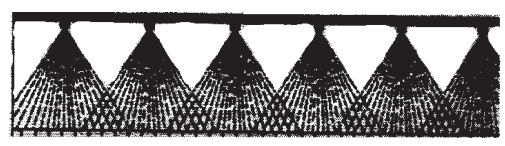

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