



Trees line the driveway at Max and Brenda Linin's farm south of Goodland, and their field on the other side of K-27 is covered by a blanket of snow.

This winter's snow is going to make a big difference, though, he said; it's about ideal for the wheat. The ground is covered, he said, and was not frozen before the snow; the moisture can seep in through the winter.

There was a windbreak on the farm when the Linins bought it, and they have had to maintain it. The trees start to thin out, Brenda Linin said, so you have to keep adding them in. Besides adding trees in spots, the Linins have added a row of small trees on the edge of the windbreak.

The snow is good for those trees, Brenda Linin said; the drought really took a toll, requiring a lot of watering, especially for the little trees.

Farming has seen changes in practices and technology, Max Linin said. It is always changing, he said; nothing ever gets to where you know everything — there is always a better way to do things.

The changes have come gradually over time, he said, but some of the biggest have been in technology, such things as the Global Positioning System and automatic steering.

It's nice, Max Linin said; it kind of spoils you. After using it, he said, you get to where you don't know how to live without it, like a microwave.

There are a lot of things out there, he said, that if a guy can afford them

are really nice things for farmers.

Brenda Linin said one of the big changes she noticed in the last 10 years is farmers haven't done as much tilling. There has been a shift in work, she said, from tilling to more spraying. The time for spraying varies from crop to crop, Max Linin said, and is affected by the weather. It's definitely a different management, he said; you spend money on chemicals instead of fuel.

Linin said he hasn't gotten into using computer programs for managing his farm; he just does the necessary bookkeeping. He'd rather be outside, Brenda Linin said.

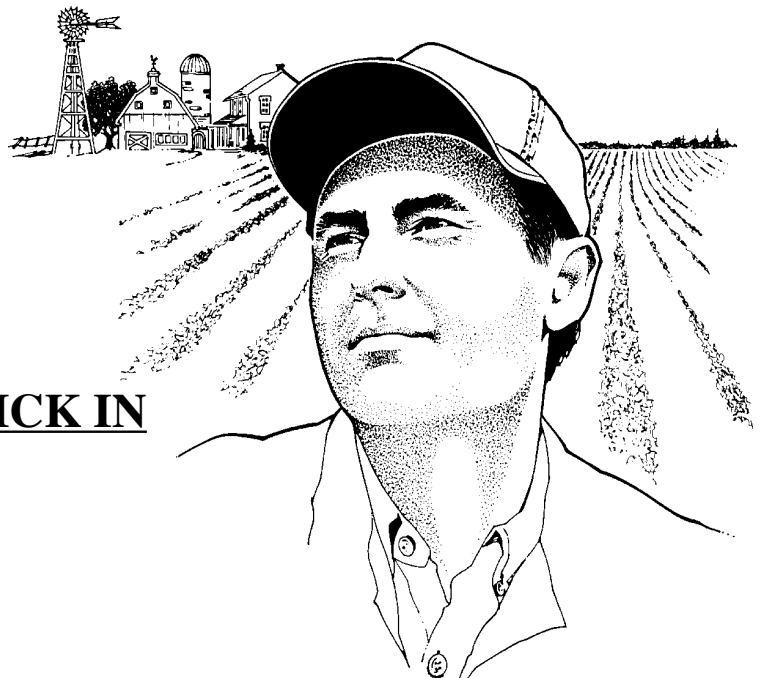
Max Linin describes the farm as "medium-sized." There are some advantages to being at an economical size, he said; if you're too small, you can't afford some of the equipment you need, and if you're too large, it's hard to keep track of things. You can lose efficiency hiring men, he said; they don't have the same interests as you do.

There are a lot of different scenarios for small farms, he said; some work in town and have hobby farms that are doing fine. Some a little bigger may struggle, he said, since they're too small to justify some of the equipment they need.

Each is a little different, he said; you have to find out what works for you. There are a lot of decisions to be made, Brenda Linin said.

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Farming changes idea for winning limerick



Tyler Neufeld holds a Lego model of Darth Vader's Star Wars ship. Behind Neufeld are Lego models of the Shuttle and the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars. Neufeld has a huge Lego collection.

"Jake was a farmer of the land
Who believed he should lend a hand

No-till and rotation
Lots of motivation

Gave a field on which he could stand."

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Tyler Neufeld, 10, oldest son of Jona and Darin Neufeld won the National Conservation Resource Service state award for his limerick that won at the Sherman County level last year.

He is in fourth grade and said it took him about a week to write the first draft and then he rewrote it about three times.

He said the second rewrite was not very good, but he had figured out the idea and then he had the basics for the third rewrite while sitting in a car with his mom and dad.

"Once I had the ideas, we started on the rhyming words," Tyler said. "I had some help from my parents with the rhyming words."

Darin Neufeld said Tyler may not live on a farm, but his grandparents are both in farming and ranching, and

there are farms on both sides of the house where they live on the county road east of the radio stations.

Tyler said the limerick was not hard for him but might have been for other people.

To get started, Tyler chose to do something about land but said he could have done the limerick on anything as long as it dealt with conservation.

The finished limerick was written in class on paper provided by Sandy Rodgers of the Sherman County Conservation District.

Tyler said Mrs. (Susan) Jensen was a great teacher to have, and she made learning fun.

Tyler came up with the no till and rotation concept, his father said, and thought some of that came from watching the changes in the farming practices of the fields around the family home.

His mother Jona said when they first moved out there both farmers were plowing their fields several times a year, and she used to complain about the dust coming from the fields and getting into the house.

She said she talked about how no

till would help stop the dust. She said that over the years both farmers changed to low till or no till, and the dust has settled.

Darin said he thought Tyler learned about rotation from listening to his grandparents, and seeing the variety of crops planted in the fields around their home.

Tyler said he was proud of the limerick and happy it won the state award.

Asked about how he likes school, Tyler said he likes everything except writing.

"I have some trouble getting ideas down on paper," Tyler said, "but I do like concrete poetry we are doing in class."

Tyler said the idea is to draw a picture and then write a poem about the picture that is written around the outside and inside of the picture.

He said the writing is what they do in their journals in class, and there is a variety of writing styles. Sometimes they are given a topic to write about.

Outside of school Tyler enjoys sports, basketball, football, soccer and golf. Tyler said he played in junior golf tournaments last summer and

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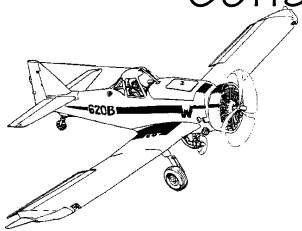
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Tyler Neufeld plays the piano, and has been taking lessons. He likes playing, His parents Darin and Jona said they encouraged Tyler because they each remember learning to play as kids.

likes playing golf.

Tyler is taking piano lessons and said he has been doing this for a couple of years. He likes playing the piano, and his father and mother have encouraged him because they took lessons when they were young and it gave them an appreciation for music.

Tyler is better known for his collection of Lego toys, and was grand champion at last year's Northwest Kansas District Free Fair with his Harry Potter castle project.

Darin said Tyler has an extensive Lego collection, and Tyler showed off several of his favorites including the Millenium Falcon and Darth Vader's ship from Star Wars, a model of the NASA Shuttle and the international space station.


Tyler said he has narrowed what he wants to be when he grows up down to being an astronaut or a NASA scientist. Tyler said he likes to build things, so he might go into construction or engineering.

Tyler has a brother Austin, 7, and a sister Megan, 3.

He said he learned about the award after Rodgers came back from the state convention in December.



The Harry Potter Lego of Hogwart's Castel Tyler built last year won the Grand Chapmion ribbon at the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair. Tyler said it took several people to walk it into the Ag Building, and he had to do some quick rebuilding before the judging.



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Each year is challenge for conservation office

By Fred Wedel
District Conservationist

The annual meeting of the Sherman County Conservation District (SCCD) is February 12, 2007. My journey as District Conservationist for Sherman County and NRCS is fun and rewarding. Each year I challenge myself to meet more of the people in Sherman County.

"Locally Led" is a buzzword that is often used when describing resource management and Conservation Districts. The more it ("Locally Led") is used the better it gets. To me the foundation of "Locally Led" is sharing Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) with a Rancher or Farmer on their property. Since 1935 technical assistance has been shared by the Soil Erosion Service, Soil Conservation Service and currently by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in cooperation with a Local Conservation District.

Some Key Points of Technical Assistance:

CTA is a voluntary program that provides technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain and improve their natural

resources. Resources include soil, air, water, plants, animals and people.

Through CTA technical assistance is given to farmers, ranchers, local government, citizen groups, Tribal governments, consultants, State and Federal agencies and others.

Technical assistance provides opportunities for maintaining and improving land and its management, conserving water and improving water quality, providing habitat for fish and wildlife, maintaining and improving grazing land and enhancing

recreational opportunities.

Technical assistance includes inventory and evaluation of all resources. This information helps landowners and managers make land use, environmental and conservation treatment decisions and helps them apply and maintain conservation practices.

The CTA program does not include financial assistance. However through the CTA program, clients will develop conservation plans, which may serve as a basis for them

to enter into financial assistance and easement conservation programs provided by other Local, State and Federal programs.

Conservation Districts and NRCS assist land users with development of conservation plans for farms and ranches. Practice design, layout and construction assistance is provided.

All owners and managers of private land are eligible to receive technical assistance. To receive technical assistance, a landowner or manager may contact the local Conservation Dis-

trict or NRCS. Participation in the CTA program is voluntary.

For more information about CTA, please contact your local Conservation District at the USDA Service Center. In Goodland the service center is located at 210 west 10th street. 785-899-3070 extension 3. Information is also available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

I invite everyone interested in conservation of our valuable natural resources to stop my office for a visit.

Apprentice program offers hands-on career experience

By Jan M. Klaus
Earth Team Coordinator, Hays

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Kansas has a program that offers a unique chance for high school and college students to experience what it is like to have a career working in natural resources conservation.

Through the Kansas Apprentice Program, students can work as apprentices in their local conservation service field office. Opportunities may be available in other conservation offices throughout the state.

The apprentice program is a way for students to learn firsthand what employees of the conservation service do for agriculture and the environment. All students will be considered for the apprentice program whether they have an urban or agricultural background.

The apprentice program offers students an opportunity to start a career in natural resources. An apprentice position allows a student to participate in a variety of hands-on learning experiences, including engineering

surveying, staking conservation practices like terraces and ponds, water quality activities, environmental education and natural resources camps.

Apprentices gain experience and knowledge that will help them make career choices. Whether or not they go to a college or technical school, their work experience will be good for job applications or resumes. Many scholastic scholarships require applicants to have completed some form of community service, and an apprenticeship could fulfill those requirements.

Applicants must be at least 14 years of age. Hours are flexible to fit the student's schedule.

Prospective apprentices are invited to stop by their local U.S. Department of Agriculture's Service Center and talk to the conservation service staff.

Information regarding the apprentice program and Earth Team volunteers is available on the Kansas Web site at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov — go to Quick Access and click on Earth Team Volunteers or type in www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/KS/about.

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Sherman County district report for 2006

This is the Annual Report of the Sherman County Conservation District for the Calendar year of 2006.

The 2006 Annual Meeting was held February 13th, 2006 at the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Goodland. Mr. and Mrs. Bob Bradshaw received the Banker's Award and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Bauman were recipients of the Windbreak Award. BreAnna Nemechek, Adam Duell and Devin Mangus were recipients of the Friends of Conservation Award.

One hundred fifty cooperators enjoyed the meal furnished by the District and local banks. Dean Graber introduced the First Christian Church Choir who provided the entertainment for the evening. Lonnie Whiteker and Dean Graber were re-elected to the board by secret ballot.

Thirty-six plaques were presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting for the Poster, Limerick, Essay and Hyper-Studio Stack Contest. Sandy Rodgers, District Manager presented conservation programs prior to the contest.

The Goodland Star-News published the Annual Soil Conservation Edition. KLOE/KKCI radio continues to support conservation throughout the year.

Sherman County Farmers continue to support conservation in Sherman County.

All Compliance plans are on schedule. Approximately 523 CRP contracts are in place for approximately 61,113.4 acres. The State Water Resources Cost Share funded jobs for 2006 included tanks, livestock wells, range plantings and septic systems that were failing. There are 53 active EQIP contracts, one Wetland Reserve Program contract and four Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contracts in Sherman County.

The Sherman County Conservation District continues a strong education and information program. A fair booth was displayed in August. Sandy Rodgers, District Manager, worked with 5th and 6th graders on the Poster, Limerick, Essay and Hyper-Studio Stack Contest. The 3rd through 4th Grades also participated in the Poster and Limerick Contest. Sandy gave programs in the classroom. The District Board awarded Aaron Duell a graduating senior in Sherman County a scholarship to attend the college of his choice. Sandy took BreAnna Nemechek, Devin Mangus and Adam Duell, who make up the Sherman County ECO-Team to the Environthon, held at Salina in May. The Eco-team has been an independent study project supported by Sherman County 4-H.

The District offers grass seed, flags, trees, rabbit netting and weed barrier for sale as a service to area cooperators, as well as providing additional funding for the District Programs.

Sherman County Conservation District paid dues to the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, the KACD Auxiliary, Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development and the Kansas Association of Conservation District's Employees Organization.

The District works closely with their conservation partners, including State and National legislators, National Resources Conservation Service, County Commissioners, K-State Ex-

tension, Wildlife and Parks, Farm Services Agency, Groundwater Management District No. 4 and many others to reach mutual conser-

vation goals.

The District continued their Memorandum of Understanding with Wildlife and Parks con-

cerning cost share funds. Sandy Rodgers serves

See REPORT, Page 14

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Managing soil quality makes big difference

By Joel A. Willhoft

Resource Conservationist, Hays

Managing or maintaining soil quality is an issue that is gaining momentum in rural Kansas.

A definition of soil quality, put simply, is how well the soil does what farmers want it to do. Farmers today are realizing the soils they farm can do more for them if managed properly.

Six Keys to Soil Quality

There are six basic keys in managing soil quality: enhance organic matter, avoid excessive tillage, manage pests and nutrients, prevent soil compaction, keep the ground covered and diversify crops.

Whether the soil is naturally high or low in organic matter, adding new organic matter every year is perhaps the most important way to improve and maintain soil quality.

Regular additions of organic matter improve soil structure, enhance water and nutrient-holding capacity, protect soil from erosion and com-

paction and support a healthy community of soil organisms.

Practices that increase organic matter include: leaving crop residues in the field, choosing crop rotations that include high residue plants, using optimal nutrient and water management practices to grow healthy plants with large amounts of roots and residue, growing cover crops, applying manure or compost, using low or no tillage systems and mulching.

Reducing tillage minimizes the loss of organic matter and protects the soil surface with plant residue. Tillage is used to loosen surface soil, prepare the seedbed and control weeds and pests.

But tillage can also break up soil structure, speed the decomposition and loss of organic matter, increase the threat of erosion, destroy the habitat of helpful organisms and cause compaction. New equipment allows crop production with minimal disturbance of the soil.

An important function of soil is to buffer and

detoxify chemicals, but soil's capacity for detoxification is limited. Pesticides and chemical fertilizers have valuable benefits, but they also can harm non-target organisms and pollute water and air if they are mismanaged.

Nutrients from organic sources also can pollute when misapplied or over-applied. Efficient pest and nutrient management means testing and monitoring soil and pests, applying only the necessary chemicals at the right time and place to get the job done and taking advantage of non-chemical approaches to pest and nutrient management, such as crop rotations, cover crops and manure management.

Compaction reduces the amount of air, water and space available to roots and soil organisms. Compaction is caused by repeated traffic, heavy traffic or traveling on wet soil. Deep compaction by heavy equipment is difficult or impossible to remedy, so prevention is essential.

Bare soil is susceptible to wind and water erosion and to drying and crusting. Ground cover protects soil; provides habitats for larger soil organisms, such as insects and earthworms; and can improve water availability.

Ground can be covered by leaving crop residue on the surface or by planting cover crops.

In addition to ground cover, living cover crops provide additional organic matter and continuous cover and food for soil organisms.

Ground cover must be managed to prevent problems with delayed soil warming in spring, diseases and excessive buildup of phosphorus at the surface.

Diversity is beneficial for several reasons. Each plant contributes a unique root structure and type of residue to the soil. Diversity of soil organisms can help control pest populations, and a diversity of cultural practices can reduce weed and disease pressures.

Diversity across the landscape can be increased by using buffer strips, small fields or contour strip cropping. Diversity over time can be increased by using longer crop rotations. Changing vegetation across the landscape over time not only increases plant diversity but also the types of insects, microorganisms and wildlife that live on your farm.

For more information about natural resources conservation, go to your local U.S. Department of Agriculture's Service Center and talk to the Natural Resources Conservation Service or conservation district staff or visit the web site at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov.

Conservation district report

REPORT, from Page 13

as the Conservation District's representative to the Western Prairie RC&D, with Fred Hall serving as alternate.

Greg Nemecek represents the Sherman County Commissioners. Greg Nemecek, Sandy Rodgers, Mary Volk, Janet Rumpel and Fred Hall serve on the local advisory committee for Western Prairie RC&D, and Fred Wedel serves as an advisor to that group.

The Sherman County Conservation District Manager, Sandy Rodgers, continues to participate in the Northwest Kansas Conservation and Environmental Alliance.

This group consists of District Managers representing six County Conservation Districts. Their objective is to search for funding through grants and foundations to enhance and ensure a quality environment for future generations in Northwest Kansas. Sandy was re-elected President of the group.

The District offered prize money to 4-H and

individual fair booths that carried a conservation theme.

Mr. and Mrs. Dean Graber, Mr. and Mrs. Lynn Ihrig and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wedel, Dennis Shank, Bill Selby and Sandy Rodgers attended the KACD Convention held at Wichita in November. Sherman County won the attendance award. Tyler Neufeld won First Place in the State Limerick Contest.

The District reviewed the long-range program and also reviewed the memorandums of understanding with all cooperating agencies.

The Sherman County Conservation District's objective is to promote locally led conservation and to assist landowners and operators to apply conservation practices to the land with the technical assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Conservation Office is available for assistance to anyone needing help solving his or her conservation needs. The District Board meets the first Thursday after the first Tuesday of every month with the exception of July.

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Speakers give good advice at range school

By Rick Davis

Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition

"Let the cow do the work," is Marlene Moore's philosophy!

Moore emphasized the benefit of grazing efficiency and a drought-management plan in her keynote address when I heard her speak at the Western Kansas Adult Range School last summer at Camp Lakeside at Scott County Lake.

She and her husband operate Shamrock Ranch of Wallace, Neb. This is a grass-based, cow/calf and calf backgrounding operation comprised of 700-900 pairs.

With 7,000 acres, containing 55 miles of fence, 33 watering points and 85 paddocks comprised of 135-140 acres each, Moore has moved toward low-cost production that includes winter feeding on corn stalks and attributes increased output by 50 percent due to grazing practices.

Like many ranchers, Moore weathered a drought in 2002 but walked away with several valuable lessons that ultimately lead her toward developing a drought-management plan.

"Making management decisions under duress often results in bad decisions," Moore said. "I wanted to take a pro-active stance."

Moore's drought principles include monitoring conditions, including subsoil moisture, temperature, rainfall and wind. Know your critical dates of grass production and feed requirements, adjust stock to fit carrying capacity, lengthen rest periods for grass, combine herds and never drought feed.

"Focus on what you can control," Moore emphasized.

The range school was organized by Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development Council of Colby and the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition and sponsored by the Truax Company and Kansas Section of the Society for Range Management.

As coordinator of the grazing coalition, I wanted to share some of the highlights of this range school with those who were not able to attend and provide a review for those who may have been there.

Recordkeeping

"Keep good records" was the advice from Carl Davis, a Graham County grazer enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Con-

servation Security Program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Davis lives in the Upper South Fork of the Solomon River, one of three watersheds approved for Conservation Security Programs in 2006. Davis has cross-fenced 80 acres and excluded his cattle from a stream that meanders through his property. His alternative water sources use a solar system on a trailer.

Davis used the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and other cost-share programs to help him complete his plan. He employed several simple low-cost management strategies like rotating his salt and mineral blocks in pastures to minimize herd hoof damage and overgrazing.

He has moved his cattle up and out of stream and creek areas by simply moving the mineral blocks and his moveable alternate watering supplies mentioned above.

For his efforts, Davis receives a higher-level payment per acre for enhancing his rangeland resource. Conservation Security Program makes 10 yearly payments for three tiers or levels of resource protection and enhancement.

Enrolling his entire operation and completing a few practices to help his livestock production and improve the rangeland are paying him several dollars more per acre in the security program.

Again, his main point offered to participants is to keep good records, and if you don't, start now.

As a companion talk to Davis, Dwayne Rice, Natural Resources Conservation Service rangeland management specialist, described how agriculture programs are moving more from commodity and disaster payments to rewarding producers who do a good job protecting and improving their natural resources. He feels programs like Conservation Security Program will be how federal support will reach land users.

Alternative Ranch Economics

Joe and Nancy Moore, with the help of son Laramie, provided an entertaining and informative presentation on alternative ranch economics including wildlife and ecotourism.

In addition to managing 300 head of longhorn cattle on 8,000 acres near Bucklin, the Moores operate a guest ranch. Don't expect much rest if you stay because the Moores emphasize they are a working ranch, not a dude ranch. Ranch visits range from a half-day to several-day trail

drives, and you may find yourself roping, branding and fixing fence. The Moores also generate revenue with deer hunts and sell skulls, hides and deer horns.

Water Quality

Ken Sherraden, Grazing Lands Coalition, presented the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol, a method for assessing the health of streams.

"Streams and the adjoining land, called riparian areas, may seem rather insignificant in western Kansas, but up to 80 percent of wildlife often uses these areas during the course of their life," Sherraden explained.

Proper stream and riparian area management also contribute toward qualifying for Conservation Security Programs in eligible watersheds.

Know Your Plants

"Plant identification is critical," Roger Tacha said. "You have to know what a plant is before you can manage it."

Tacha and Toni Wesley, conservation service rangeland management specialists, provided several sessions of plant identification of native grasses and forbs.

Plant identification sessions provided a basis for a session on sampling, measuring and monitoring native grasses and forbs, as demonstrated by Dwayne Rice, Rangeland Management Specialist, and Dr. Walt Fick, Kansas

State University, Department of Agronomy, Range and Forage. Four methods were demonstrated, including a photo point, permanent transect, grazing exclusion cage and a grid.

Grazing Systems

Rice also provided a presentation on grazing systems, their development and monitoring. He discussed the five forage husbandry principles: rest period, stocking rate to match carrying capacity, graze period, herd effect and stock density.

Balancing Animal Needs

K.C. Olson, Kansas State University, Animal Sciences and Industry, provided talks on balancing animal needs with forages and effective grazing distribution tools to management harvest of forages.

He engaged the group in a ranching scenario challenge that engaged the audience to select the diet a steer would select on an adjoining hillside. Participants had 15 minutes to collect native grasses and forbs in a small paper sack. Olson critiqued the participant's collections and a Kansas State University Animal Science cap was awarded the winner.

Contact speakers

To contact any of the speakers at the school or for information on Grazing Land Coalition and its activities, contact the organization at (620) 241-6921 or visit their web site at www.kglc.org.

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