

Wildlife in town



A young cotton tail checks out the area in front of a bush on 14th and Caldwell on Wednesday night. Hot and dry conditions force wildlife into town for water.

Photo by Kevin Bottrell/The Goodland Star-News

Sign up being done for Conservation Reserve

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture began sign-up for the Highly Erodible Land Initiative under the Conservation Reserve Program on Monday. The purpose of this initiative, announced by Secretary Vilsack in February, is to protect up to 750,000 acres of the nation's most highly erodible croplands. Producers may enroll at their local Farm Service Agency county office. Enrollment will continue until the 750,000 acre limit has been met.

"CRP is an important program with more than 25 years of success in protecting the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation," said Vilsack. "We are excited to include this new initiative that targets the most fragile cropland, in addition to other targeted initiatives that are currently available under the CRP."

CRP is a voluntary program designed to help farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers protect their environmentally sensitive land. Currently, 29.6 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Through this Highly Erodible Land Initiative, eligible landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible cropland for a period of 10 years. Croplands with an Erodibility Index of 20 or greater are eligible for enrollment.

In March, Secretary Vilsack announced an increase of one mil-

lion acres of land in a new CRP Initiative to Restore Grasslands, Wetlands and Wildlife. On June 12, a portion of the one million acres available for the initiative were allocated. Initiatives receiving acres are: Wetland Restoration, 200,000 acres; Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds (quail), 150,000 acres; Duck Nesting Habitat, 150,000 acres; and Pollinator Habitat, 100,000 acres. Signup for the Pollinator Habitat initiative began on June 12 as part of the continuous sign-up criteria.

CRP has a quarter-century legacy of successfully protecting the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the U.S. Under CRP, farmers and ranchers plant grasses and trees in crop fields and along streams or rivers. The plantings prevent soil and nutrients from washing into waterways, reduce soil erosion that may otherwise contribute to poor air and water quality, and provide valuable habitat for wildlife. Plant cover established on the acreage accepted into the CRP will reduce nutrient and sediment runoff in our nation's rivers and streams. In 2011, as a result of CRP, nitrogen and phosphorous losses from farm fields were reduced by 623 million pounds and 124 million pounds, respectively. The CRP has restored more than two million acres of wetlands and associated buffers and reduces soil erosion by more than 300 million tons per year. CRP also

provides \$1.8 billion annually to landowners-dollars that make their way into local economies, supporting small businesses and creating jobs. In addition, CRP is the largest private lands carbon sequestration program in the country. By placing vulnerable cropland into conservation CRP sequesters carbon in plants and soil, and reduces both fuel and fertilizer usage. In 2010, CRP resulted in carbon sequestration equal to taking almost 10 million cars off the road.

In 2011, USDA enrolled a record number of acres of private working lands in conservation programs, working with more than 500,000 farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices that clean the air we breathe, filter the water we drink, and prevent soil erosion. Moreover, the Obama Administration, with Agriculture Secretary Vilsack's leadership, has worked tirelessly to strengthen rural America, implement the Farm Bill, maintain a strong farm safety net and create opportunities for America's farmers and ranchers. U.S. agriculture is currently experiencing one of its most productive periods in American history thanks to the productivity, resiliency and resourcefulness of our producers.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office or visit FSA's website at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp for additional information regarding CRP.

Kansas' Cobalt Boats sells to high end consumers

By Ron Wilson

Director

Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University

The beautiful boat gleams in the sunlight as the owners enjoy the thrill of skimming across the water. Not only are they enjoying a beautiful boat, they are wearing fashionable clothing and preparing to enjoy a high quality vintage wine. Remarkably, the boat, the sportswear, and the wine all bear the same name: Cobalt.

Paxson St. Clair is CEO and co-owner of Cobalt Boats, one of the nation's leading boat makers. His brother-in-law Sean Callan is company president. Paxson's father, Pack St. Clair, grew up at Independence and enjoyed boating

at Grand Lake in Oklahoma with his father. After college, Pack and a friend started building boats.

In 1969, Pack went to a big marine industry trade show in Chicago. He didn't sell a single boat or sign up a single dealer, but he came back with an idea. There were big companies selling mass-produced boats, but Pack saw an opportunity to target the high end of the marketplace. Essentially, he asked: What if we were to produce a super high quality, high-value boat?

Pack came back to Kansas to put his idea to work. Then the company had to find prospective boat owners who were willing to pay extra. It was a hard sell at first, but then a dealer in San Francisco gave them a try. The reaction from boat owners was so positive that business began

to build.

In 1970, Cobalt Boats moved to the closed Standard Oil Refinery in Neodesha. At that point, the company had 20-plus employees. Today, Cobalt Boats employs more than 500 people and sells boats from coast to coast and around the world. Neodesha is a rural community of 2,652 people. Now that's rural.

Paxson St. Clair joined the company in 1989 and moved up to become CEO in 2007. His father Pack is in the plant each week but not as involved in day-to-day operations.

Today the company's product line includes various types of luxury boats, from 20-foot bowriders up to 32-foot cruisers. Boats are sold through a network of dealers around the nation and around the globe. Dealers can be found in 32 different

nations, from Australia to the United Kingdom.

"I travel to lots of boat shows," Paxson said. "People ask me where the boats are made. When I tell them Kansas, they think I'm joking." And what does Paxson think about that? "We could not build these boats anywhere else. The people, the work ethic, and the pride they have in being the best is something that we don't think can be duplicated anywhere else in the world."

He points to the company's long-term work force with pride.

"What makes Cobalt quality is the hearts and minds of those 500 people who work out there," he said. "It boils down to craftsmanship and attention to detail." As the company's website says, "We never aimed to be the biggest boat

company, just the best."

In 2001, J. D. Power and Associates began an annual evaluation of quality and customer satisfaction in the marine industry. The annual evaluation continued until the economic downturn in 2009. Not only did Cobalt Boats win first place in quality and customer satisfaction in every single year, J. D. Power informed them that they had never had anybody win over second place by such a large margin.

The Cobalt commitment to quality has carried over to the creation of a line of sportswear, such as polo shirts, caps, t-shirts and sweatshirts bearing the Cobalt name. There is even a high quality Napa Valley wine, a Cabernet Sauvignon, which bears the name Cobalt.

"My dad has only one hobby

besides boats, and that's making wine," Paxson said. "He worked with a friend in Napa Valley. They produced a serious wine that was ranked a 93 by Wine Spectator magazine."

For more information, go to www.cobaltboats.com.

The Cobalt boat skims across the water, as the owners proudly wear their Cobalt shirts and prepare to enjoy some California Cobalt wine. We salute Paxson and Pack St. Clair, Sean Callan, and all those involved with Cobalt Boats for making a difference with a commitment to quality - from wineglasses to watercraft.

Fun mud run scheduled Aug. 26 at Hays by college, hospital

HaysMed's Center for Health Improvement and Fort Hays State University are sponsoring the Big Creek Mud Run on Sunday, August 26. The mud run is a two mile obstacle course that winds through the Fort Hays State University Campus. Participants should be ready to "get their dirty on"; as they jump, crawl and climb through mud and other obstacles.

"The Mud Run was so successful last year that we are excited to once again host this event," said Stephanie Schaffer, Fitness Director of the Center for Health Improvement. "People loved the event last year and we are adding some additional

features to make it even better."

This year's event will include a Kids Mud Bath that begins at noon (Mountain Time). Kids will be allowed to "get their dirty on" after the last wave of competitors has completed the course. No obstacles, just plenty of mud.

The Mud Run is carried out in heats of 30 people. The first wave begins at 7:30 a.m. (Mountain Time) and a new wave starts every 30 minutes with the last one beginning at 11:30 a.m. (Mountain Time). You can run in your own wave or get your friends together and all run in the same wave.

Register now. Deadline for reg-

istering for the event is Wednesday, Aug. 22. The fee is \$25 for participants and they must be 18 years and older. All participants will receive a t-shirt and a free lunch. Live music and food will be available from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Mountain Time). Participants are encouraged to bring along their families and friends.

For more information about the event or to register please visit our website at www.thecenter.haysmed.com/mudrun. Call Kelly at The Center at (785) 623-6324 or Emily at Fort Hays State University at (785) 628-5908 with questions.

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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Reader Recipes
Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies
Yield: makes about 6 dozen
Ingredients
• 3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
• 1/3 cup whole wheat flour
• 1 tsp. baking soda
• 1 tsp. baking powder
• 1/2 tsp. coarse salt
• 1 cup packed light brown sugar
• 1 cup granulated sugar
Ingredients continued...
• 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
• 1/2 cup natural peanut butter
• 2 large eggs
• 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
• 2 cups salted whole peanuts
• 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
Directions: Preheat oven to 350°. Stir together oats, flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt in medium bowl; set aside.
Put sugars, butter and peanut butter in bowl of electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment. Mix on medium speed until pale and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Mix in eggs and vanilla. Reduce speed to low, add oat mixture, and mix until just combined. Mix in peanuts and chocolate chips.
Using a 1 1/2 inch ice cream scoop, drop balls of dough 2 inches apart on baking sheets lined with parchment paper. Bakes cookies 13-15 minutes, rotating sheets half way through, until cookies are golden brown. Let cool.
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