

Spring 2011

## Cowley County Conservation District

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### ***Cowley County State Cost Share Signup is March 15—April 15, 2011***

The Cowley County Conservation District is conducting the sign-up for state-financed cost-share funds from March 15 to April 15, 2011.

Cowley County landowners with natural resource concerns on their property are encouraged to visit the office during the sign-up to discuss solutions and possible state financial assistance. This step is important even if you have visited the office prior. State Cost Share funds will become available on July 1, 2011.

If you are thinking about building terraces or waterways, planting grass for pasture or hay, planting a filter strip or riparian forest buffer, cross-fencing and develop water sources to implement a grazing system, plugging an abandoned well or replacing a failing septic system, or any other conservation measure this year, come in and make an application during this signup.

The landowner or legal agent **MUST** sign applications for cost-share assistance. Additional information needed at the time of sign-up includes the landowner's social security number, name, address and phone number.

**The mission of the Cowley County Conservation District is to protect, conserve, and improve the natural resources of the district. We focus on water quality, soils management to limit erosion and run-off, and critical habitat areas; and guiding use through project implementation, outreach and education of best management practices, enhancement, and development to benefit present and future citizens.**

### ***Planting Native Grass Makes Cents/Sense***

Do you have marginal cropland or old tame grass pastures needing planted to permanent grasses for grazing or haying? If so planting native grasses may be the most profitable way to go.

Now is the time to plan for spring planting since the latest date to plant warm season native grasses is May 15.

Research completed by USDA scientists at El Reno OK Agricultural Research Station comparing profits from native rangeland to tame grasses proved that native grasses,

although having lower stocking rates result in higher NET profit due to decreased input costs, particularly fertilizer. Therefore, native grasses make cents for your operation.

Perennial native grasses are adapted to our soils and climate and once established never need to be replanted as long as management practices such as moderate grazing, prescribed burning and brush control are carried out. Fertilizer is not needed nor recommended for native grass production and livestock performance is high

due to multiple species (prairie buffet) providing balanced nutrition for livestock. Native grasses also make excellent habitat for native wildlife species. So; planting native grasses also makes sense.

There is also money available through County Cost Share Programs to off-set the cost of planting native grasses. Cost-share ranging from 50% to 75% is available. Contact the Conservation District-NRCS office at 620-221-1850 ext 3 to get started on your planting plan.

Barry Barber, District Conservationist.

The Conservation District is building an "E" distribution list for program announcements and the occasional news item or newsletter. To participate in this distribution list email [rachel.workman@ks.nacdnet.net](mailto:rachel.workman@ks.nacdnet.net) with a subject line of SUBSCRIBE to sign up. We promise not to spam you!

[www.cowleycountyconservationdistrict.com](http://www.cowleycountyconservationdistrict.com)

**2011 Dates to remember**

*State Cost Share Signup,  
March 15 through April 15*

*Earth Day, April 22*

*Soil Conservation Steward-  
ship Week, April 24—May 1*

*Kansas Envirothon, May 11*

*Kansas 4H Discovery Days,  
May 31-June 4*

*Cowley County Wildflower  
Tour, June 11*

*KSSRM Range Youth Camp,  
July 5-8*

*Cowley County Conservation  
Field Day, September 21*



**Financial assistance through  
State Cost Share Programs**

Conservation practices benefit all Kansans by providing cleaner water, more productive crop and grazing lands, and improved wildlife habitat. The State Conservation Commission (SCC) administers three voluntary cost-share programs, the Water Resources Cost-Share Program, the Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program, and the Riparian and Wetland Protection Program. These programs provide financial assistance to eligible landowners for conservation practices that reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and/or conserve water.

All of the SCC programs are guided by the SCC board of commissioners consisting of five elected and four appointed members. The Kansas Water Authority annually develops the Kansas Water Plan which provides recommendations to the Kansas Legislature in determining appropriations and priorities. Most of the SCC programs are funded through the Kansas Water Plans dedicated sources of funding. It is this funding source the SCC, through conservation districts, has financial assistance available for Kansas landowners to apply conservation practices

Program funds are allocated to each conservation district on July 1, which is the beginning of the state fiscal year. Additional financial assistance funds are allocated to address water quality impairments identified in river segments and lakes through the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) process. The TMDLs set the

maximum amount of pollution that a specific waterbody can receive without violating the surface water quality standards

**Local Program Administration**

The state cost-share programs are administered locally in each county by the conservation district. The conservation district board of supervisors tailors state programs to meet critical conservation needs identified within the county. Annually, the supervisors establish local policies, which include selecting practices, determining landowner limits, and setting cost-share rates not to exceed 70%.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides a majority of the technical assistance. Conservation practices must also meet standards to ensure functionality and long life. Most practices funded by the SCC must meet standards of the NRCS. Nearly all of the conservation districts in Kansas are co-located in a USDA Service Center with NRCS.

**Application for Cost-Share**

Each county conservation district accepts requests for financial assistance during a sign-up. After the sign-up period each application is reviewed by the board of supervisors and district staff for eligibility and rank ordered according to state and locally identified priorities. Landowners are notified by the conservation district if the project is approved or denied for cost-share assistance.

**Contract**

After conservation district approval the cost-share applicants must

sign a State Conservation Commission Contract for Financial Assistance which explains conditions of receiving state cost-share funds. This document assures proper conformance to state practice implementation and maintenance requirements for a minimum of 10 years. Construction of cost-share practices cannot begin until a contract is approved by the conservation district, approved by the State Conservation Commission, and signed by the landowner(s).

**Payment**

After the practice is completed the landowner notifies the conservation district and submits invoice(s)/receipt (s) to the office. An authorized representative of the conservation district will verify the practice was completed according to specification. The conservation district submits a request to the State Conservation Commission for payment to the landowner. County average cost is used as basis for determining the amount of cost-share assistance earned. Cost-share is also based upon availability of funds, project limits, and landowner limits. A landowner receiving \$600 or more in cost-share assistance will receive Form 1099-G from the State of Kansas.

Please contact the Cowley County Conservation District for program availability or to see how you can get more involved in conserving soil & water for future generations. 620-221-1850 ext. 3 or [ra-chel.workman@ks.nacdn.net](mailto:ra-chel.workman@ks.nacdn.net)

*Extracted from the Kansas State Conservation Commission website.  
[www.scc.ks.gov](http://www.scc.ks.gov)*

**Steps in Completing Conservation Practices**

Every year farmers who are experience some type of soil erosion will be in need of conservation practices. In order for these practices to get done in a timely manner, there are several steps that need to be followed that will benefit NRCS, your contractor and you.

The following steps outline this procedure and explain your responsibilities as well as those of your contractor and NRCS.

1—NRCS will assist in developing a plan for your farm which will include design and layout of practices requested.

2—It is the owner-operators responsibility to apply with the district if cost-share assistance is needed and to hire a contractor to do the actual construction.

3—When you have selected a contractor, inform NRCS who it will be so he can inform us as to when he will be there so the

**Jess Biddle, Soil Conservation Technician**

practice won't have to be staked several times because of disappearing flags. NRCS will furnish any necessary plans and specification to him.

4—After stake out and completion of construction, your contractor will check out the work. The written documentation showing that the practice meets specifications will be given to NRCS for approval.

5—With this checkout documentation, NRCS is responsible to certify the work so you can receive your previously approved cost-share payment. How you and your contractor handle this payment is strictly your business. Keep in mind that you cannot be certified to receive a cost share payment until the contractor does check-out and NRCS certifies it!