



Collaborate | Educate | Implement

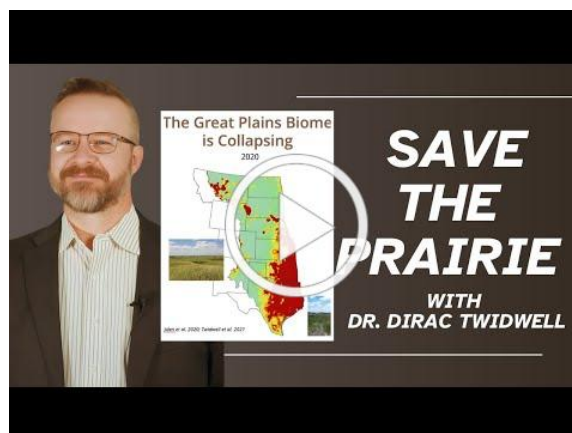
This is the quarterly newsletter for April 2025 from the
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

Encourage others to [sign up!](#)

Woody Encroachment

A Growing Threat to Kansas Grasslands and Our Water

Have you noticed more trees popping up in Kansas grasslands? You're not imagining things—and it's more than just a change in the landscape. This phenomenon, known as woody encroachment, is a growing threat to the health of the Great Plains, and it's already having serious impacts on our land, water, and way of life.



In a [recent presentation](#), Dr. Dirac Twidwell shared compelling research on how the spread of woody plants—especially Eastern Red Cedar—is transforming native grasslands across the region. While these trees may seem harmless, they pose a significant risk to wildlife habitats, ranching operations, and even the future of our water resources.

Grasslands play a vital role in maintaining healthy watersheds. When native grasses are overtaken by dense stands of woody plants, rainfall that would typically infiltrate the soil is intercepted by tree canopies or lost to evaporation. This reduces groundwater recharge and increases water loss, putting additional strain on already stressed water supplies. For the Ogallala Aquifer, which provides drinking water and irrigation to much of western Kansas, this loss is especially alarming. [Continue reading...](#)

State Cost Share

The window for state cost share sign-up is quickly closing

—don't miss out!

If you're considering conservation projects for your land, reach out to your [local conservation district](#) as soon as possible. They can guide you through the available State Cost Share programs and help address your conservation needs.

Even if you can't make this year's deadline, it's never too early to start planning for next year. Due to reductions in technical staff, the process might experience delays, so early planning for the upcoming year will set you up for smoother success. For more information on State Cost Share and the steps involved, visit kacd.net.

State cost share programs support practices related to water quality, reservoir protection, aquifer conservation, and soil health. Here are just a few ways these programs can benefit your land:

- Septic tank or wastewater lagoon repairs
- Abandoned water well plugging
- Pasture Management: brush removal, water supply & cross fence
- Terraces
- Grassed waterways
- Forest buffers
- Filter strips



Reach out to your local conservation district today—your future conservation success starts with planning now!

Learn More About State Cost Share



KDA Spotlight



Monica Wichman

Grant Coordinator

**Kansas Department of Agriculture-
Division of Conservation**

The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is proud to spotlight Monica Wichman, who joined the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Conservation as Grant Coordinator in October 2023.

Stepping into the world of grants has been a new and exciting challenge for Monica after nearly a decade in the banking industry. Her background in finance, operations, and client services



provided her with a solid foundation, and her natural affinity for numbers and detail-oriented work have made her a great fit in her current role.

A lifelong Kansan, Monica takes great pride in supporting agricultural programs and local communities across the state. In managing grants and technical assistance agreements, her goal is to ensure vital funding reaches the programs and projects that need it most.

**Read Monica's Full
Story**

Have you heard about the Leopold Conservation Award?



It's a special way the Sand County Foundation celebrates private landowners in Kansas who are doing amazing things to care for their land. These landowners are true champions of Aldo Leopold's idea that we're responsible for nurturing and preserving our natural resources.

In Kansas, the award is presented in collaboration with some great partners: the American Farmland Trust, our own Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, and the Ranchland Trust of Kansas. Each year, the chosen recipient not only earns bragging rights for their outstanding conservation work but also receives a generous \$10,000 prize and a beautiful crystal trophy.

The Leopold Conservation Award recognizes real-life examples of voluntary conservation practices. These stories inspire other landowners and help everyone appreciate how private stewardship plays a crucial role in conservation success.

Know someone doing great conservation work? Nominations for the 2025 Leopold Conservation Award are open now! Make sure to [submit your nomination](#) by **June 2, 2025**.

District Spotlight

Keri Harris

District Manager

Franklin County Conservation District

The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is

proud to recognize Keri Harris, District Manager of the Franklin County Conservation District, for her outstanding contributions to conservation and environmental education in Kansas.

Keri was recently honored with the John K. Strickler Award, a lifetime achievement award presented by the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) at its 2025 Excellence in Conservation and Environmental Education Awards Celebration in Manhattan, Kansas.



Since joining FCCD in 2001, Keri has demonstrated a deep commitment to expanding conservation education and fostering environmental stewardship across the state. Her leadership has helped transform FCCD into a dynamic source of educational resources and outreach. She has played a pivotal role in introducing innovative tools such as the Soil Tunnel Trailer and Earth Balloon, both of which provide interactive and engaging lessons in soil health, water conservation, and sustainability.

[Read More About Keri](#)

Local Work Groups

What's Next? Why is it Important?

The 2025 Local Work Group (LWG) process is nearing a conclusion. To date, 38 LWG meetings have been held across the state. 28 of those meetings were held on a multi-county Management Unit basis, and 10 were held on a County specific basis. For those that attended a LWG meeting, we like to say “thank you” for your participation. The LWG process is successful because of the input received from local stakeholders.



Why are LWG meetings important? LWG meetings support the locally-led conservation process to address natural resource concerns by providing recommendations on local natural resource concerns & priorities, USDA conservation activities & programs, education & training needs, and local information & outreach needs.

What happens with the information gathered from LWG meetings? Once the LWG meetings are completed, a 2025 LWG State Summary report will be developed, which will summarize the LWG information captured in 2025. This report will be provided to NRCS leadership for consideration as they evaluate resource concern prioritization, program eligibility/ranking/funding/implementation decisions, staffing plans, and information and outreach needs. The information gathered through the LWG process is important not only to USDA but also to numerous other state, federal, and non-government entities that value this locally derived information.

Thanks again to each of the Conservation Districts and District Managers who planned, coordinated, and implemented the 2025 LWG meetings. Also, look for the 2025 LWG State report update on the [KACD website](#).

Continue to check the [Workgroups](#) page for updates.

Memorial Scholarships Support Future Conservation Leaders

Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) Ed & Youth Committee proudly administers Memorial Scholarships to support college students committed to pursuing careers in natural resources, conservation, and related fields. These scholarships honor individuals who made significant contributions to conservation and natural resource protection.

Congratulations to This Year's Scholarship Recipients!

KACD General Memorial Scholarship of \$1000 each to college junior or seniors majoring in a Natural Resource-related field have been awarded to:

Addison Sherer - Kiowa County, Kansas

Dylon Harris - Douglas County, Kansas

Tate Miller - Geary County, Kansas

Mackenzie Malson - Home County - Payette County, Idaho

The Caroline and Don Peterson Memorial Scholarship supports juniors and seniors majoring in Agronomy, Range Management, or closely related fields. This year's recipient is **Mikayla Dibben** from Geary County, Kansas.

Visit [kacd/youth-scholarships](#) to learn more. The next scholarship deadline will be March, 2026.

Envirothon

Kansas Envirothon participants have demonstrated remarkable dedication at regional competitions, showcasing their hard work and readiness for the upcoming state event. Although the regional competitions serve as crucial practice rounds rather than qualifiers, they provide essential preparation for the demanding state competition, where winners earn the honor to represent Kansas at the National Envirothon.

What is Envirothon?

Envirothon is North America's largest high school environmental education competition, designed to challenge students' knowledge and practical skills across five key environmental areas:

- Soils & Land Use
- Forestry
- Wildlife
- Aquatic Ecology
- Rangeland Management

Additionally, teams must tackle a current environmental issue selected annually by the National Conservation Foundation's Envirothon Operating Committee.

This Year's Regional Envirothon Winners were:

Council Grove Event:

1st – Manhattan A 2nd – Manhattan B 3rd – Mission Valley

Red Rock Ranch Event:

1st – Holton A 2nd – Holton C 3rd – Holton B

Mound City Event:

1st – Uniontown A 2nd – Sedan 3rd – Uniontown B

Ellsworth Event:

1st – St. John's A 2nd – St. John's B 3rd – Ellsworth

[Read Full
Article](#)

[Learn More About
Envirothon](#)

[Follow Kansas Envirothon On
Facebook](#)

Kansas Shines at NACD

Kansas recently distinguished itself at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) through outstanding contributions and achievements.

Kansas ranked among the top 10 states for Contribution Memberships supporting NACD dues, demonstrating a strong statewide commitment to conservation leadership and initiatives.

Representatives from the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) and the Employees Organization proudly attended the [NACD Spring Fly-In](#) in Washington D.C. This important event provided the opportunity for Kansas conservation leaders to meet directly with legislators, advocating for vital conservation policies and resources benefiting communities across the state.

NACD Poster Contest - 2nd Place

Adding to Kansas's accomplishments, student Keira J., from Washington County, achieved national recognition by placing 2nd in the [NACD Poster Contest](#) for the 2nd & 3rd-grade category, showcasing exceptional talent and environmental awareness.

Congratulations to everyone involved for representing Kansas so impressively at the national level! We hope to see a great crowd in [San Antonio in 2026](#).



Upcoming Events to Note

2025 Youth Conservation Contests Announced!

The KACD Conservation Education and Youth Committee proudly announces the 2025 youth conservation contests. This exciting opportunity promotes stewardship and conservation education among Kansas youth, with county-level contests leading to state competitions.



2025 Contest Themes:

- Poster, Essay, and Limerick: "Home is Where the Habitat Is"
- Speech: "May the Forest Be With You Always"

County winners advance to state contests, with state champions recognized at the November Annual KACD Convention. Select winners may also represent Kansas at the national competitions hosted by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

Join us in encouraging youth participation and fostering tomorrow's conservation leaders! Ask your child's teacher to participate in [annual local conservation contests](#).

Soil Health & Cover Crop Field Tours



A Conservation Field Day Tour in Kansas offers participants an engaging educational experience to explore sustainable land management, conservation, and agriculture.

These events typically include educational workshops, guided tours of farms or conservation sites, hands-on conservation activities, and demonstrations of modern, sustainable agricultural practices.

Attendees have the chance to interact directly with experts, participate in Q&A sessions, and network with others interested in environmental stewardship. Materials and meals are often provided, and pre-registration is usually required.

For details on upcoming tours, [contact your local conservation district](#).

Farmer-to-Farmer Meetings



Farmers, ranchers, and producers across the state are encouraged to attend the Farmer-to-Farmer meetings in their area. These casual meetings are focused on the conservation and preservation of our state's natural resources.

Many counties hold a morning coffee or gather at a local seed shed with neighbors just to talk conservation.

Learn more about your local Farmer-to-Farmer meetings by contacting your [local conservation district](#).



Have You Watched Our YouTube Channel?

Did you know that Kansas Association of Conservation Districts has a YouTube Channel?

Find a variety of informational and educational videos focused on conservation efforts, as well as producer Spotlight videos!

Don't wait, get subscribed today!



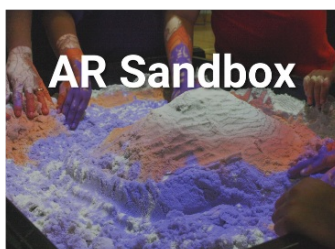
Educational Tools



Did you know that your county conservation district has Educational Tools available for programs in local classroom?

Take a look at some of the resources available to educate your students about conservation of our natural resources on the kacd.net/educational-tools.

As you develop your lesson plans for the upcoming school year, be sure to contact your [local conservation district](#) to learn more about the educational programs they offer!



AR Sandbox



Earth Balloon



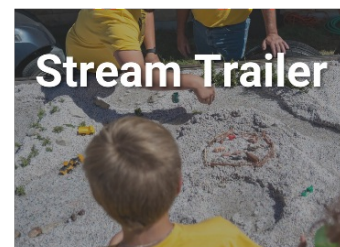
**NPS Watershed
Enviroscares**



**Rainfall
Simulator**



Soil Tunnel



Stream Trailer



Job Opportunities

Interested in available jobs in Conservation? Check out kacd.net/jobs to stay up-to-date on open positions at across the state!

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Upcoming Events



- >> April 24 - [Kansas Soil Health Partnership Forum](#) - Virtual
- >> May 3 - [Flint Hills Festival](#) - Manhattan
- >> May 9-11 - [Four State Farm Show](#) - Pittsburg
- >> May 20-22 - [Noble Grazing Flint Hills Series](#) - Session 1 - Council Grove
- >> May 22 - [Kansas Soil Health Partnership Forum](#) - Virtual
- >> June 26 - [Kansas Soil Health Partnership Forum](#) - Virtual
- >> Aug. 1-2 - [Cropping Considerations in an Arid Climate](#) - Greensburg
- >> Aug. 6-8 - [High Plains Journal Live: From print to in-person](#) - Wichita
- >> Aug. 12 - [Soil Health Field Day](#) - Ottawa County

Kansas Soil Health Alliance provides a list of many of the [soil health events](#). If you are hosting a soil health event, please submit it to Jennifer at Kansas Soil Health Alliance!

For upcoming KACD events, visit [KACD Events](#) on our website!

Connect With Us!

Follow along with us on our Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, and website for information about upcoming events, program details, available resources, news and more!



Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
(785) 650-1330 | dan.meyerhoff@kacd.net | kacd.net



"Providing local leadership to protect and improve Kansas Natural Resources through

**Visit KACD
Website**



Content and email marketing provided by **Marketing Angle** for KACD.

Funded through a grant with **USDA-NRCS Kansas**.

Kansas Association of Conservation Districts | 414 Autumn Lane | Hays, KS 67601 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!