



Collaborate | Educate | Implement

This is a quarterly newsletter from Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.

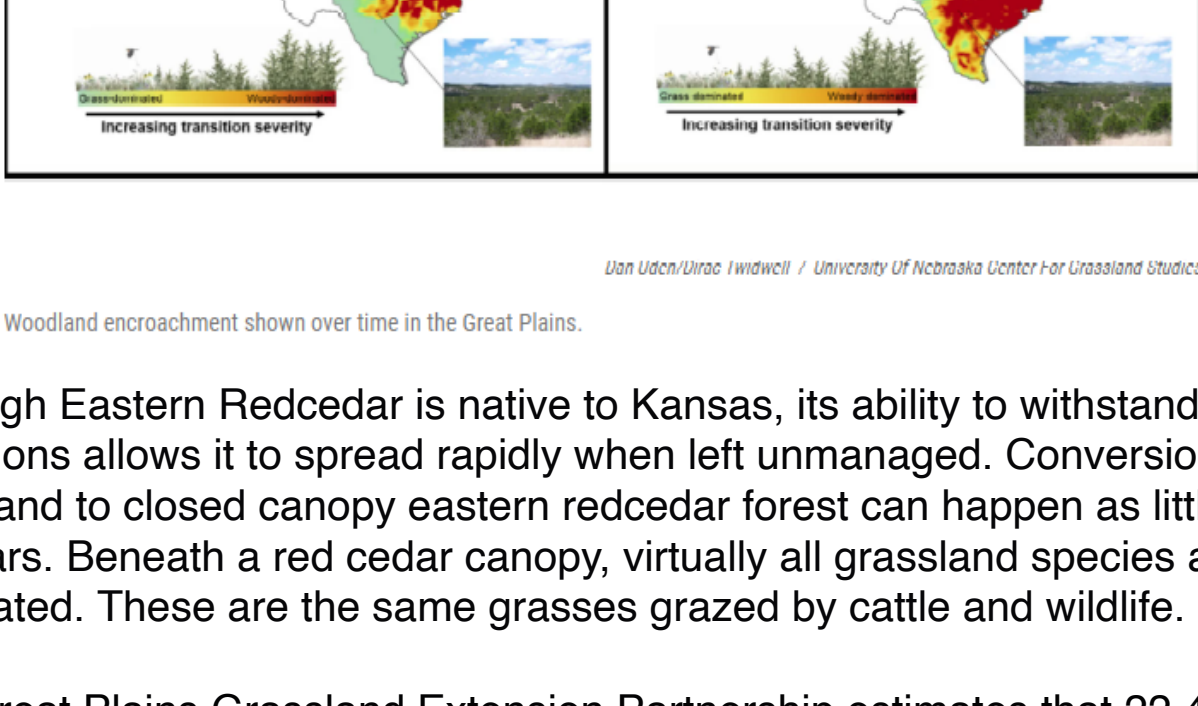
Encourage others to [sign up!](#)

KDA Spotlight

Choking the Prairie

Threat of Woody Plant Encroachment in Kansas and Beyond

Kansas' grasslands are declining as woody plants like eastern red cedar spread and take over what was once intact and treeless grasslands. This is referred to as woody plant encroachment and is among the greatest threats to the grasslands in the Great Plains. It is expanding from Texas to Montana, with Kansas directly in its path. In Kansas, the volume of woody encroachment has increased 23,000% since 1965. Without changes in management, record losses in rangeland production are expected to continue.



WOODY PLANT ENCROACHMENT IN KANSAS
WOODLAND ENCROACHMENT SHOWN OVER TIME IN THE GREAT PLAINS.

Although Eastern Redcedar is native to Kansas, its ability to withstand harsh conditions allows it to spread rapidly when left unmanaged. Conversion from grassland to closed canopy eastern redcedar forest can happen as little as 40 years. Beneath a red cedar canopy, virtually all grassland species are eliminated. These are the same grasses grazed by cattle and wildlife.

The Great Plains Grassland Extension Partnership estimates that 22.4 million tons of rangeland production are lost annually in the Great Plains to Woody Encroachment with 1.5 million lost in Kansas. That is the equivalent 2.5 million large round bales lost in Kansas. These grassland losses would support 321,000 cows in Kansas with a calculated economic loss of \$19.7 million.

[Full Article](#)

[Statistics](#)

Hugh Hammond Bennett Conservation Award Winner

For Doug Spencer, of Salina KS, conservation planning is more than a profession, it's a way of life. Doug places extreme value in educating and training producers and staff to address critical grassland issues and to achieve meaningful conservation outcomes. Spencer played a key role in the success of a feature on the Great Plains Grasslands Initiative in conjunction with National Cattlemen's Beef Association's Cattlemen to Cattlemen TV series. He also served as a panelist for a presentation as part of the theme "Defending America's Grasslands" at the 2023 Western Working Lands for Wildlife Workshop. Spencer was a key co-author in the development of the newly published "Reducing Woody Encroachment in Grasslands: A Pocket Guide for Planning and Design," a comprehensive, science-based tool for conservation planners working to save America's grasslands. [Continue reading...](#)

Soil Health

Principles of Soil Health with Charles Vollmer

Discover the critical importance of soil health in our latest video. Did you know that over the past 160 years, the United States has lost a staggering 57.6 billion tons of topsoil, with events like the Dust Bowl contributing significantly? Protecting our fertile soils with sustainable practices is paramount for our yields, livelihoods, and the world.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

Other Great Soil Health Videos to Check Out!

[Producer Spotlight - Chad Simmelink](#)

[Producer Spotlight - Dennis Anderson](#)

AWARD NOMINATIONS DEADLINE

The Sand County Foundation proudly honors private landowners committed to improving the condition of their land through the prestigious Leopold Conservation Award. These individuals embody Aldo Leopold's land ethic.

In Kansas, the Sand County Foundation collaborates with esteemed partners like the American Farmland Trust, the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, and the Ranchland Trust of Kansas to present the Leopold Conservation Award. Recipients of this esteemed recognition receive a \$10,000 prize and a distinguished crystal trophy.

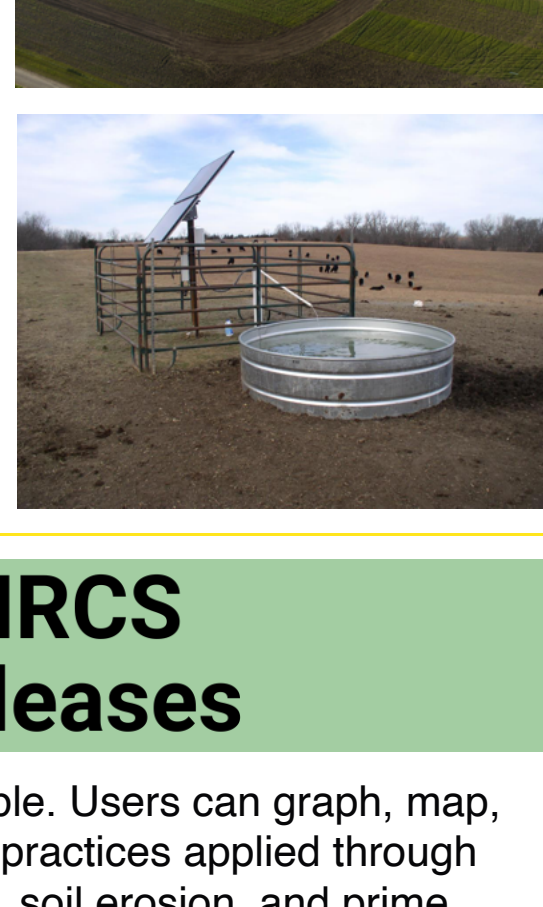
The Leopold Conservation Awards highlight outstanding accomplishments in voluntary conservation efforts, serving as a source of inspiration for fellow landowners and fostering a deeper understanding among the public of the critical role played by private land stewards in achieving conservation objectives.

If you would like to Nominate someone for the Leopold Conservation Award please have your [application](#) turned in by the **June 1, 2024 deadline**.

State Cost Share

Reach out to your local conservation district today with your conservation concerns and learn about ways the State Cost Share can help you!

- Project types:
- Irrigation and Water Conservation
 - Nutrient Management
 - Pasture and Rangeland Management
 - Abandoned Water Well Plugging
 - Erosion and Sediment Control
 - On-site Wastewater System
 - Soil Health
 - Wetland Development / Restoration
 - Riparian Area Protection & Enhancement



[Get Help](#)

USDA NRCS News Releases

New [data visualization tools](#) are now available. Users can graph, map, and download customized datasets based on practices applied through NRCS programs and survey data on land use, soil erosion, and prime farmland from the National Resources Inventory (NRI)

NRCS offers voluntary [financial and technical assistance programs](#) to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Urban Ag

KACD will be hosting [two workshops](#) focusing on urban and specialty crop growers. Special guest speaker Roger McCowen, Professor of Agricultural Law and Taxation at Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, will be the featured speaker and discuss:

- Legalities on Fencing
- Legalities on Signage
- Agro-tourism Kansas Statute -- involves the use of volunteer labor and liability
- Organic Or No Commercial Herbicide Use & chemical drift from production agriculture neighbors
- Basic elements of a business plan specific for urban, non-traditional, and specialty producers

There will be two events: one in Ottawa on June 3, servicing the KC to Topeka and Paola urban corridor, and the second in Wichita on May 29. [Your local Conservation District](#) manager will have more information on the events as the dates get closer.

Farmers for Soil Health

Farmers for Soil Health (FSH) is a nationwide, farmer-led collaboration between the Soy Checkoff, Pork Checkoff, and National Corn Growers Association that assists farmers in implementing and maintaining soil health practices. Within Kansas, the project is led by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, the Kansas Soil Health Alliance, and Heartland Soil Services with support from Kansas Soybean and Kansas Corn.

FSH has multiple avenues to assist growers: **\$50 per acre** financial incentive over three years of cover crop planting; access to a marketplace connecting farmers to supply chain partners; and local technical assistance to aid in transitioning acres to cover crops and other soil health practices.

[Learn More](#)

ADM Climate Smart

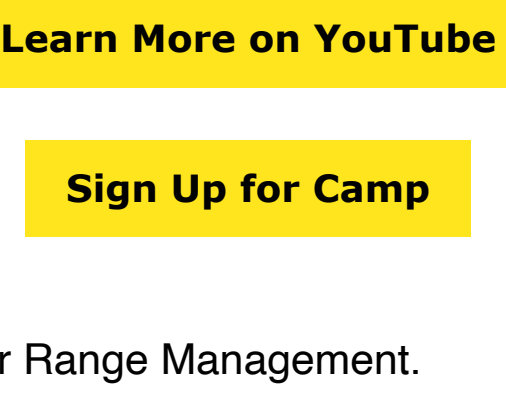
KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (KACD) ENTERS 3RD YEAR OF CLIMATE SMART INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIP

KACD is once again partnering with Archer-Daniels-Midland Company (ADM) to provide [Climate Smart](#) financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who plant cover crops in their crop rotation. Payments will range from \$10 to \$25 per acre, depending on when the acreage was first planted to a cover crop. Additional payments are available for those that have wheat in their crop rotation. Signup is all online and takes 15-20 minutes. Final program requirements are expected to be out by mid-April. Reach out to your local [Conservation District](#) manager for program details.

Upcoming Events to Note

Kansas Range Youth Camp

The Kansas Range Youth Camp is a great opportunity for upcoming sophomore, junior, or senior students passionate about plants, livestock, or wildlife! Dive into an unparalleled educational experience at the Kansas Range Youth Camp, with over 50 years of nurturing Kansas youth. From plant identification to wildlife management, this camp offers a comprehensive curriculum alongside enriching activities like swimming, fishing, and hiking.



[Learn More on YouTube](#)

[Sign Up for Camp](#)

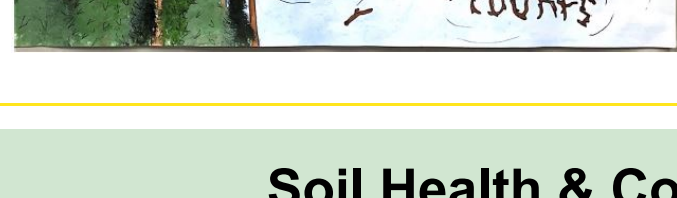
Sponsored by the Kansas Section Society for Range Management.

****The 2024 Kansas Range Youth Camp has reached capacity for male students but is still accepting applications for female students.**

Annual County Conservation Contests

The KACD Conservation Education and Youth Committee is dedicated to fostering environmental stewardship among tomorrow's leaders. Through annual conservation contests, including speeches, posters, essays, limericks, and photography, youth across the state are encouraged to engage with conservation efforts.

Winners from local contests proceed to state and even national levels, with recognition at the Annual KACD Convention and the NACD Annual Meeting, respectively, amplifying their impact and influence.

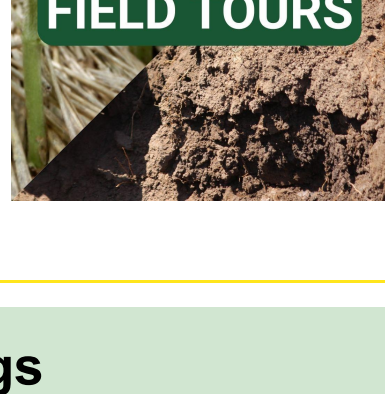


[Learn More](#)

[Find Your Local Conservation District](#)

Soil Health & Cover Crop Field Tours

Continue to watch for upcoming Soil Health and Cover Crop Field Tours hosted by your local conservation districts.



These are great opportunities to visit local properties to learn and see more about implemented soil health and cover crop practices.

Farmer-to-Farmer Meetings

All local farmers, ranchers, and producers are encouraged to attend these regular Farmer-to-Farmer meetings focused on the conservation and preservation of our state's natural resources. Learn more about your local Farmer-to-Farmer meetings by contacting your [local conservation district](#).



Educational Tools

In our state, conservation districts play a vital role in safeguarding and educating about our natural resources. These districts offer educational programs that harness cutting-edge tools and techniques. Trained staff ensure an enriching experience for participants. Reach out to your local conservation district to explore the diverse range of educational programs they offer.

Learn more about all of these amazing tools at [kacd.net/educational-tools](#).

Job Opportunities

Interested in available jobs in Conservation? Check out our [kacd.net/jobs](#) to stay up-to-date on open positions at NRCS and KDA!

Upcoming Events

>> **Apr. 4 - Field Day - Spring Cover Crops - Haven, KS**

>> **Apr. 6 - Southeast Kansas Grazing and Forage School – Cool Season Grasses**

>> **Apr. 10 - Upland Game Bird Biology & Management - Salina, KS**

>> **Apr. 13 - Homesteading for Soil Health Workshop - Abilene, KS**

>> **June 8 - Southeast Kansas Grazing and Forage School – Warm-Season Grasses**

>> **June 11-14 - Kansas Range Youth Camp**

>> **June 23-28 - Veryl Switzer/KSU Agriculture Camp for Youth**

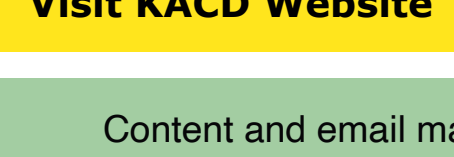
Kansas Soil Health Alliance provides a list of many of the [soil health events](#). If you are hosting a soil health event, please submit it to Jennifer at [Kansas Soil Health Alliance](#)! Or visit [KACD Events](#).

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!



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"Providing local leadership to protect and improve Kansas Natural Resources through collaboration, education and implementation"

[Visit KACD Website](#)



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