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Coalition Calls for Reform in 2007 Farm Bill

Whiting, Ks.- The Kansas Rural Center joins the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, a nationwide coalition representing farm and rural interests, in giving Congress and the Administration low marks for key parts of the 2002 Farm Bill, and issued a comprehensive reform agenda for the next Farm Bill.

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, an alliance of farm, rural and conservation groups, gave Congress a D+ and the Administration a C- for their farm bill efforts on ten key components of the 2002 bill. In its platform for the new farm bill, **No Time for Delay**, the Coalition calls on Congress to embrace reform and construct new policies and programs that promote economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, and rural prosperity.

"While some are calling for a "stay the course" approach to farm policy, we see a need for substantial change if we are to meet our future food and resource needs," stated Mary Fund, Communications Director for the Kansas Rural Center, a member of the Coalition and an endorser of the report card. "Congress and the Administration have largely failed with implementation of the last farm bill, leaving us with a backlog of rural economic, agricultural and environmental problems. The next farm bill is an opportunity to make a long overdue substantial down payment on a new generation of food and farm policy."
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Sustainable Agriculture Conference Tackles Rural Well-being

Manhattan, Ks. - The annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference, co-hosted by Kansas State University and the Kansas Rural Center, is set for February 16-17, 2007, at the Alumni Center on campus in Manhattan, Kansas.

Entitled **The Well-being of Rural Kansas: Healthy People, Healthy Environment, and Healthy Economies**, the conference looks at converging trends as rural advocates seek to develop policies that will continue to make rural America a good place to live and raise a family.

The conference investigates farm policy options and their effect on rural places. It looks at enhancing farm economics by turning from conventional commodity production to specialty crops, or enhanced production methods that will command a premium in the marketplace. It notes the increasing immigration of Hispanics and assesses whether some of the next generation of

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Rural Papers

Published six to eight times/year
by the

Kansas Rural Center,
304 Pratt Street
Whiting, Ks. 66552
(785) 873-3431

Fax (785) 873-3432

E-Mail: ksrc@rainbowtel.net

website: www.kansasruralcenter.org

Editor: Mary Fund

Reprints of articles are encouraged
with acknowledgement of Rural
Papers and author.

Rural Papers is the voice of the Kansas Rural Center, Inc., (KRC), a non-profit organization that promotes the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education, and advocacy. The KRC cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of soil and water. KRC is committed to economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially sustainable rural culture. The KRC is funded by private foundations, churches, and individual contributions. **Rural Papers** is available to contributors or for a \$25 per year subscription to organizations and institutions.

KRC Staff

Dan Nagengast, Executive Director
Diane Dysart, Administrative Assistant
Jerry Jost, Heartland Network Coord.
Mary Fund, Editor/CWFP Coordinator
Kirk Cusick, Salina Food System Project
Ed Reznicek, CWFP Field Organizer
Mary Howell, CWFP Field Organizer
Dale Kirkham, CWFP Field Organizer
Connie Pantle, CWFP I& E Coordinator
Troy Schroeder, CWFP Field Organizer
Jim French, Special Projects

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The Small Farmer Commentary

Making the Right Choices

by Mary Fund

As parents we implore our children to make good choices. But as adults we know that making those decisions often requires compromise and hard thinking, and that it is not always easy to do the right thing. As several stories in this issue point out, farm, food and energy policy decisions are no different.

At a recent planning meeting for the Delaware Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS), participants asked themselves why farmers and ranchers don't implement the farming practices we were listing as a means to water quality protection in the watershed?

Planting cover crops, implementing extended legume crop rotations, converting vulnerable cropland to grass, and installing grass buffers along streams are all recognized as practices that can reduce fertilizer, herbicide/pesticide, nutrient and sediment runoff into streams and rivers. But the group which included several farmers, acknowledged that getting producers to adopt these practices and others is slow going.

The existing farm commodity payment system was identified as one major barrier. "Farming the farm program", as it is often known, results in farmers being locked in to specific commodity crops that payments or subsidies are based on. Non-program crops such as the legumes or cover crops most crop rotations or conservation efforts rely on mean giving up valuable acres and that means giving up income. In other words, farm policy choices trump environmental practices.

At the Community Wind Energy conference in late October (see page 8), Kansans were asked by out of state experts why they were not taking advantage of Kansas' tremendous wind energy potential? Kansas ranks third in the nation for wind energy, yet states with far less potential are developing the resource at a benefit to communities.

Again, a public policy choice or lack thereof, stands in the way of development in Kansas.

During the recent hearings for the proposed southwest Kansas coal-fired electric plant expansion, opponents pointed out that a decision to permit these plants will preclude development of alternative energy, and our children will be left with a legacy of pollution and missed opportunities. (See page 3). Again, a public policy decision will have far reaching impact.

Most people do not understand farm programs. Ditto for detailed explanations of grids, megawatts, and particulate contaminants. But an increasing number do understand water quality and environmental problems. They also understand they should be concerned about food safety, health and nutrition issues.

Making a public policy decision in the next farm bill to tie farm support payments to conservation practices makes sense if you are a taxpayer wondering just what he or she is getting out of farm programs. The same goes for renewable energy. It just makes sense. But conscious choices must be made.

The 2006 mid-term election was my 18 year-old daughter's first election. A botched and late postal delivery of her advance ballot forced her to drive two hours one way on election day to hand deliver her ballot at her home county seat.

The easy choice would have been to let it go, but she was emphatic that her vote be counted, and that her voice be heard. Given her generation's stake in the future, she made a responsible choice.

May you all have a year of such commitment to making the right choices, and may we urge those around us to do the same. Best Wishes for 2007! □

Briefs

Water Efficiency Crucial for Ethanol's Future

Water shortages could become the Achilles heel of the ethanol boom if more efficient use of water is not made a priority, according to a paper released by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

Water Use by Ethanol Plants, by Senior Fellow Dr. Dennis Keeney and Mark Muller, director of IATP's Environment and Agriculture Program, focuses on the upper Midwest, but its' lessons are appropriate for Kansas as well.

In Minnesota ethanol plants have improved the efficiency of water use from 5.8 gallons of water per gallon of ethanol produced in 1998 to 4.2 in 2005. Assuming the data is typical of all plants, the paper speculated that water use associated with ethanol plants could increase by 254 percent from 1998 to 2008.

"The sheer number of new ethanol plants has the potential to put a strain on the Corn Belt's water resources," said Dr. Keeney. In the Plains states, where crop irrigation is more common and supplies more tenuous, one assumes the strain would be greater.

The paper recommends: 1) strengthening regulatory oversight by state and local government on the siting of new plants, with special emphasis on available water supply; 2) where feasible, site plants adjacent to municipal wastewater facilities; 3) look for water recycling opportunities with livestock facilities; 4) place a greater economic value on water; and 5) maintain publicly available records on ethanol's water consumption.

The paper can be found at www.iatp.org. □

Ks. Sierra Club Releases Wind Study

Wind farms in central and western Kansas would have substantially helped to meet high electricity loads during Kansas City's hot summer of 2003, according to a new study. Wind speeds, on average, were strong during July and August of 2003 when area utilities experienced record electricity demands. Had they been in place at the time, wind farms with state-of-the-art turbines would have produced power at a level well above average at three sites studied.

The study was conducted by Spectrum Technologists, a consultant to the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club and modeled the output of a 1.5 megawatt General Electric Wind turbine at sites in Kearny, Logan and Ellsworth counties. The study was done in response to concerns expressed by Kansas utilities that wind power would not be available when they needed it most, which is during summer heat waves.

"This study indicates that wind power could greatly reduce the need for high-cost natural gas or coal and purchased power now used to meet high loads on hot days," said Brooks Albery, spokesman for the Ks. Chapter of the Sierra Club. "That means wind power would have a high market value and save money for rate payers."

A summary of the report and the full report can be obtained on the Kansas Chapter website at <http://kansas.sierraclub.org/wind/WindStudy.htm>. □ (From Planet Kansas, August/September 2006)

Policy

KRC Testifies at Coal Plant Hearing

October and November saw three public hearings on the proposed Kansas Air Quality Construction Permit for the Sunflower Coal Plant Expansion in southwest Kansas. The following is KRC's testimony presented by Dan Nagengast, KRC Executive Director, at the October 26 hearing in Topeka, Ks. As this goes to press, 300 people attended the November 16 public hearing in Lawrence; the majority opposed the permit.

The Kansas Rural Center is a 26-year old nonprofit organization involved in sustainable agriculture, and interested in an economically viable rural economy. To that end, we've become interested in community wind energy facilities. Last summer, KRC and several members of the Governor's Rural Life Task Force visited community owned wind structures in southwestern Minnesota. The Kansas Energy Council co-hosted the trip.

Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 Lakes, and those involved in the wind industry there made direct comments about the rising level of Mercury in their lakes. They correctly connected the dots to emissions from coal fired electrical plants, and also correctly see that wind turbines offer a partial solution to the problem.

KRC is very concerned about this permit for two reasons. From an air quality perspective, building these plants 1) does the wrong thing; and 2) it will effectively prevent us from doing the right thing for the life of the facilities.

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KGA Announces Winter Grazing Conference



Low stress animal handling and weaning” is the topic of the KGA’s Winter conference set for January 20, 2007. (File photo)

Assaria, Ks.- The Kansas Grazier’s Association (KGA) is hosting a “Low Stress Animal Handling and Weaning” conference on Saturday, January 20, 2007 from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM at the Assaria Lutheran Church located at 124 West First Street in Assaria, Kansas.

The speaker will be Dr. Lynn Locatelli who currently bases her veterinary practice out of Benkelman, Nebraska. Dr. Locatelli concentrates her efforts on Low Stress Cattle handling education, consultation and training.

The conference receives support from the Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and USDA’s Risk Management Agency.

The conference registration costs \$20 for the first person from each business or family and \$10 for each additional person. For more information, please contact Mary Howell at (785) 363-7306 or marshallcofair@networksplus.net. □ JJ

Winter Farmers’ Market Conference Set

Topeka, Ks. - Save February 5 on your calendar for a Winter Farmers’ Market Conference in Topeka. Larry Johnson will speak at the conference scheduled for Monday, February 5, 2007 at the Topeka Public Library. Larry Johnson is the Manager of the Dane County Farmers’ Market in Wisconsin.

The Dane County Farmers’ Market is one of the largest producer-

only farmers’ markets in the country. The market is uniquely located around the Wisconsin State Capitol building in downtown Madison. Johnson grew up on a farm in Kansas.

His career includes work as a groundwater geologist, farm business management consultant, and fresh-cut flower grower. Look for more details on the conference later, or contact Jerry Jost at 785-865-2555, or jjost@myvine.com. □ JJ

Long on Philosophy, But High on Profits

by Connie Pantle

Valley Falls, KS—Among a field of oak trees near Valley Falls, Kansas, sixty people gathered on Thursday, October 5 to listen to Oren Long’s philosophy on farming and view the results of that philosophy.

The tour began in the pasture with Burr Oak trees that Oren planted 20 years ago in an eroding pasture to deal with the erosion as well as to capture carbon in the atmosphere. The soil in the pasture had been reshaped and exposed during the construction of the nearby intersection of Kansas Highways 16 and 4. Oren said he planted the trees to help deal with climate change and “soak up the carbon” for future generations.

“I see my farm as a complete ecosystem,” he said. Cattle graze one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. Oren said the cattle move right along as if they know they are on limited time.

“When I was young, I farmed a different way.” He said he was a true believer in industrial agribusiness farming until 1970, when he heard his graduate school professor say “there is no understanding in modern farming.” Oren recounted that the professor went on to explain that agribusiness farming has no need or interest in understanding the sciences of biology, ecology, and how the real natural world works. Oren said, after that, when he was 50 years old, he decided to “start farming.” Looking back, Oren said before that he considered himself an “agribusiness farmer.” *Contd. on page 7*

Douglas County Ranch Tour Features Multiple Ranch Goals

by Connie Pantle

Lawrence, KS— On Thursday, October 19, just over 100 people gathered south of Lawrence at the farm of John Bradley. John, whose farm is a mile and half from the Wakarusa River, began the tour by quoting Chief Seattle, “Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web; he does to himself.” The number and variety of practices on John’s farm led to dividing tour attendees into two groups. Speakers were positioned throughout the farm, and stops were made accordingly.

John grazes 25 cows on 200 acres of grass a mile and a half from the Wakarusa River, which is a tributary to the Kansas River. While the size of the herd is small, Jerry Jost, a field organizer for the Kansas Rural Center, (KRC), said it should still be a water quality concern.

“Small herds under poor management can negatively impact water quality more than larger herds using best management practices. Every farmer, regardless of size, needs to be thinking about how his or her management can improve their bottom line and their neighbor’s water quality downstream,” Jerry said.

It was because of John’s understanding of water quality that he decided to complete the River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment with KRC in 2004. The process of identifying the biggest water quality issues was “a bit overwhelming and (the RFFP) helped us identify areas of greatest need.”

The problems that John identified while completing the assessment included: run-off from the winter feeding site, water quality impacted by cattle wading in pond and streams, and year round grazing and annual haying decreased the quality of the grassland.

John said the greatest benefit of the RFFP assessment was the order in which to complete needed projects. “The prioritization it provided was a big help for us.” Therefore John decided to apply for cost-share through KRC’s Clean Water Farms-River Friendly Farm Project to put those projects in place. “We were going to implement the practices anyway, so it seemed like a good choice,” he said.

One of the first projects John took on was relocating the winter feeding site and developing a feeding pad. Will Boyer, KSU Watershed Specialist, worked with John on developing the new feeding site. Will explained that they first laid a geotextile fabric down, then covered it with inches of rock and a layer of lime. The geotextile fabric prevents the rock and lime from sinking into the mud.

Herschel George, KSU Watershed Specialist, said the “most important thing is to find the right site.” The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has eleven factors that are considered in an environmentally sound site. A good, level site located away from a creek or water source is best. Therefore, John



Douglas county Extension agent Bill Woods and John Bradley (right) outline the tour schedule of Bradley’s operation. About 100 people attended the tour in late October. (Photo by C. Pantle)

relocated his feeding site further up the hill away from the creek to reduce runoff of manure into water.

The feeding site was especially important to John as he has a limited time to feed hay to the cows. Because of his busy schedule as a veterinarian, he has two days during the week in which he can feed hay to his herd. Since he is unable to unroll hay, which distributes the manure across a larger area, he has to use ring feeders. Using ring feeders, cows tend to waste a larger percentage of hay. Two different ring-type bale feeders are being compared at John’s farm to see if wastage is reduced. One is a traditional bale feeder. The other has a large ring on the bottom and a smaller ring at the top with spaces for the cows’ heads in between.

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Sustainable Food System News

Raspberries, Strawberries and Grapes, Oh My! Historical Food Crops in the Kansas River Valley Show Promise

by Pete Garfinkel

Manhattan, Ks. - The Kansas River Valley (KRV) was historically a significant producer of both fruit and vegetable crops. To get a sense of the scale and importance of the KRV to local farmers and consumers, it's best to begin by exploring the river itself.

The Kansas River begins its journey at the confluence of the Republican and Smokey Hill rivers near Junction City and runs into the Missouri River at Kaw Point in Kansas City. A large percentage of Kansans reside in the KRV, which incorporates these counties: Geary, Riley, Pottawatomie, Wabaun-see, Jackson, Shawnee, Jefferson, Douglas, Leavenworth and Wyandotte.

The KRV was historically a major produce supplier for cities including: Junction City, Ogden, Manhattan, St. George, Wamego, Belvue, Topeka, Lecompton, Lawrence, De Soto, Bonner Springs, Edwardsville, Shawnee, and Kansas City.

To get an idea of historic production and yields in the KRV, we reviewed a few select horticultural crops in the US Census of Agriculture from 1900 through 2002. Approximate production quantities in each of the ten counties were recorded. As a result, we are able to track production history by county over the last one hundred years. A significant variety of horticultural crops were grown here. In fact, an old road sign at Troy once proclaimed it to be "The Centre of Midwest Apple Industry" and "Surrounded by 10,000 Acres of Apples". A sampling of historic KRV production is given below.

So why is historical production important to the KRV today and beyond? The knowledge that a significant variety and quantity of produce can be grown in the KRV is important when looking at local food self-sufficiency and market development. With the growth in population

and increasing demand for locally grown conventional and organic produce, new opportunities may exist for local producers.

Currently there are a number of programs related to local horticulture being developed in the KRV. For example we are developing an online local foods brokerage to link local producers with individual and institutional buyers. Farm to school programs providing local produce to school cafeterias are also being developed. Areas of interest for further development include local value-added processing and agrotourism opportunities.

A comprehensive publication on 100 years of historical food crop production in the KRV will be available shortly. □ *Pete Garfinkel is the organizer for the KRV Project; you can access his presentation on historical production at www.oznet.ksu.edu/rff.*

The following harvest data were recorded for the early 1900's in the Kansas River Valley.

Irish and sweet potatoes in 1900:

	Wyandotte Co.	Leavenworth Co.	Johnson Co.	Douglas Co.
Irish Potato	857,164 bu.	604,651 bu.	461,980 bu.	410,797 bu.
Sweet Potato	42,382 bu.	9,448 bu.	15,906 bu.	21,619 bu.

Raspberry production in 1920:

Raspberry	170,323 qts.	60,453 qts.	37,404 qts.	23,021 qts.
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Grape production in 1930:

Grapes	1,399,870 lbs.	653,956 lbs.	105,993 lbs.	381,044 lbs.
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Strawberry production in 1930:

Strawberries	346,390 qts.	219,051 qts.	47,107 qts.	32,065 qts.
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Clean Water News

Long Farm Tour... *Continued from page 4*

Oren wanted to cut expenses and make more money. He said he learned he could do this from more inputs from the land and from nature—"for free"! A financial analysis conducted by the Kansas Rural Center concluded that because of those low inputs, the Long farm is in the top third of Kansas' most profitable producers.

To achieve his goal of letting nature do most of the work, Oren divided 100 acres into eight pastures, which he rotates his herd of 60 cows through. "The cows never fail to inform me when they think it is time to move," he said. He said sometimes he follows their advice, sometimes he doesn't. "They have only one consideration, I have many," he said. Oren said he uses a Border collie dog to assist him in herding the cattle.

The grassland system that Oren uses blends three grasses: brome, fescue and orchard grass with three legumes: red clover, sweet clover and lespedeza. He said it resembles the self-sustaining prairie system where legumes provide the nitrogen. Oren explained that the nitrogen is released slowly, as the plants can use it, and no nitrogen escapes into the environment to cause pollution.

Grass is stockpiled for the winter and typically the cattle need hay only two months during the most severe part of winter. Last winter, he fed 85 bales to the herd. Oren said that he tries to be selective when cutting his pastures for hay as removing hay crop exposes the soil to the drying effects of sun and wind. To moderate this practice, he does not take hay off the



About 60 people gathered at Oren Long's farm near Valley Falls to tour his pastures. Oren's practices earned him a Tier 3 rating in the CSP program. Photo by C. Pantle.

upland and he tries not to hay every year. "The old literature tells us that there is no quicker way to ruin a field than to hay it year after year," he said. "You remove not only organic matter, but you deplete the nutrient reserves...those essential to maintaining healthy soils capable of producing nourishing foods."

Oren uses the method of mulching to build soil fertility. In August, Oren mowed his field of stockpiled winter grass and "let it lie, not only to help conserve what soil moisture was there, but to feed the soil what it needs." The pastures that he doesn't mow, he allows the cows to mulch for him. "Cows like to walk while they graze, so after a few days much of the grass is flat," he said.

As Oren's management practices are low intensive, he relies upon the work of bumblebees to pollinate and "reseed" his red clover. The bumblebee population is at its height mid-June through August, so Oren said he "manages each pasture to be in full bloom sometime during that period, so that each clover bloom will

be pollinated to produce 20-30 seeds."

Additionally, Oren allows the cattle to fertilize the pasture as they graze. After a light spring rain softens the soil and manure, Oren uses a flexible harrow to destroy and distribute the manure evenly throughout the pastures. This also makes the forage available for grazing.

Because of these management practices, the Jefferson County Natural Resource and Conservation Office approved Oren's farm for Tier III of the Conservation Security Program (CSP). According to the Kansas NRCS, "CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations." When Jim Marietta, Jefferson County District Conservationist, told Oren his pastures scored a 50 on the assessment, Oren asked if that was good? He was told that 50 was a perfect score!

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Community Wind Advocates Ask “Why Not Kansas?”



A panel of Kansas legislators closed out the Community Wind Conference. Above, (left to right), Rep. Dan Johnson, Rep. Tom Sloan, Sen. Sharon Schwarz, and Rep. Josh Svaty fielded questions.

Concordia, Ks. - Over 200 Kansans participated in the Community Wind Workshop hosted by Cloud County Community College (CCCC) with interactive television sites at community colleges in Colby, Butler County, Dodge City and Goodland, and Pioneer Communications Center in Tribune. Numerous legislators, energy industry professionals, and farmers or others interested in community wind attended. The workshop was sponsored by CCCC, Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Farm Bureau Legal Foundation for Agriculture, the Kansas Energy Office, Wind Powering America, and the Kansas Rural Center.

Planning for the workshop was initiated by several people who had visited community wind projects in southwestern Minnesota last summer as part of a joint tour organized by the Kansas Energy Office and the Governor's Rural Life Task Force. Participants on that trip became convinced that locally owned wind

projects could greatly benefit our rural economy, if public policies can be changed to help instead of hinder their development.

To that end, the organizers brought in Jack Keers, Pipestone County Minnesota County Commissioner, Lisa Daniels, founder and Executive Director of Windustry, and Tom Wind, a well-known community wind project consultant from Jefferson, Iowa. The three addressed the major policy and technical obstacles presented to those who wish to put together a project. It is no secret that wind energy has become developed, quite profitably, in those states where utilities are required to purchase a percentage of their energy from renewable resources. Mr. Wind, in particular, was quite envious of the huge Kansas wind resource, and made it clear that there would be an enormous effort to take advantage of it if it were in Iowa or Minnesota.

Commissioner Keers spoke of the

benefits to their rural economy and tax revenues from community owned wind. He also discussed a caucus of energy producing counties which has had considerable success in influencing the Minnesota legislature to recognize the value of their wind resource, and to pass legislation which encourages development of locally owned projects.

Other speakers included Joe King, who walked through a Community Wind decision tool kit (available on CD Rom from the Kansas Energy Office), Jennifer States from JW Windpower LLC (a community wind developer working in Kansas), Joe Harkins, Special Assistant to Governor Sebelius, and Ken Frahm, from the Kansas Energy Council. Stuart Lowry representing the Kansas Electric Cooperatives and Colin Hansen representing Kansas Municipal Utilities, Inc. also discussed the issues surrounding the integration of wind into their member associations.

A legislative panel of Rep. Josh Svaty, Sen. Sharon Schwarz, REp. Tom Sloan, and Rep. Dan Johnson, and Rep. Carl Holmes closed out the program, followed by a brief tour of the CCCC Wind Energy Technology program.

Organizers will be meeting shortly to begin exploring ways to maintain momentum. In the meantime, farmers or cooperatives interested in understanding more should begin talking to their local utility, and should contact Jim Ploger at the Kansas Energy Office for the tool kit at jploger@kcc.state.ks.us. Copies of all power point presentations should be available soon on the Kansas Energy Office website at www.kcc.state.ks.us/energy/index.htm. □

Alternative Voices Relay Potential for Agriculture's Future to Moran

by Mary Fund

Salina, Ks. - Representatives from the Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Organic Producers, Kansas Catholic Conference, and Kansas Farmers Union recently met with Kansas Congressman Jerry Moran to discuss issues and positions for farm policy changes in the 2007 farm bill.

The purpose of the meeting was to launch an on-going dialogue with the Congressman as the 2007 farm bill debate and discussion heats up. At the end of the meeting, the group asked to establish formal regular meetings with the Congressman to focus attention specifically on the needs of sustainable agriculture. Moran and his aide expressed a willingness to do so.

Conservation, rural development, renewable energy, and nutrition and food security needs for the most vulnerable in our society were the focus of the discussion.

The organizations explained that they share a vision of independent family farms, healthy rural communities, and a safe and healthy food supply that is common to most farm groups. But they emphasized that they represent an alternative voice in agriculture -- a voice that is growing in numbers as more consumers and citizens become concerned about health, nutrition, and the environment, and as more farmers search for ways to meet consumer demands for a healthier food product and "greener" production methods that also provide income and profit for the farmer.

"It is a small wave," stated Dan Nagengast, KRC's Executive Director,

"but it is building, and it includes more and more people, and institutions. Rural America needs a new economic engine, and the focus on local and regional food production, increasing concern about obesity and health issues within the current food system, and high energy costs and continued environmental concerns, create not only challenges but some interesting possibilities."

KRC's farm bill statement presented to Rep. Moran specifically called for a shift to conservation based farm support programs. "KRC has long been concerned that the manner in which farms are subsidized has contributed to consolidation of farms, decreased population in rural areas, reduced economic opportunities in rural communities, and decreased funding to important conservation and rural development programs. Tying payments to conservation or stewardship would link tax dollars to the broader public good of clean water, healthy soil, and increased diversity and a healthy ecosystem base for future generations".

"Conservation must be the centerpiece of the next farm bill," the statement asserted, "in order to meet increasing demand for non-trade distorting support for farmers and ranchers on the international level, and to meet long term food security needs here at home."

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was intended to meet this, but as implemented it fell far short of its potential. KRC urged

that CSP receive full funding and be returned to its original intent as a nationwide entitlement program with continuous sign-up.

KRC also noted that USDA must work harder to recognize the value of sustainable agriculture practices, including organic production and managed grazing systems. For instance, "the value of resource conserving crop rotations (which are based on rotating legume based crops and cover crops with commodity crops) to conservation should not be underrated in the CSP program; and EQIP should support the transition from a conventional to an organic system just as it supports transitions to no-till."

KRC also noted that rural development programs that encourage local food production can create new regional and local enterprises boosting the rural economy in ways commodity agriculture does not. According to a study done by KRC in the early 1990's production of horticultural crops in Kansas has significantly declined since the early 20th century. Analysis of potential yields and consumer needs show that Kansas would need 5 to 10 times the 6,618 acres currently in vegetable production to meet the food needs of the 2.7 million Kansans. Furthermore, studies done by the University of Kansas Institute for Public Policy have documented that consumer demand for locally produced fruits and vegetables exceeds current production.

The farm bill should also provide incentives for farming systems that rely less on consumption of high-energy inputs, such as the conversion of cropland to grazing systems, adoption of resource conserving crop

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Farm Policy

Coalition....

Continued from page 1

“We need a farm and food system that provides producers a decent living, offers rewards or incentives for conservation based production practices, and that provides consumers assurances of safe, secure and healthy food,” stated KRC’s Fund. “Kansas needs to address where the next generation of farmers is going to come from. We need to produce more of our food needs locally or within the region, and we need to take care of the most vulnerable in our society-- children, the low income, and the elderly.” In addition to production agriculture, the farm bill includes the food stamp and nutrition programs.

In **No Time for Delay**, the Coalition and KRC urge the federal government to adopt a series of key policies that are urgently needed to help new farmers enter agriculture, promote profitable family farms, enhance the environment, and build healthy, diversified rural community economies.

Among these policy recommendations, the most critical for Kansas include:

*** Expanding the Conservation Security Program (CSP) to reward farmers and ranchers for effective conservation;** according to SAC and KRC, this benchmark program authorized in the 2002 farm bill has been underfunded and narrowly limited to a few watersheds, and sustainable and organic system approaches should receive more attention for their role in environmental protection and resource management.

*** Making critical investments in agriculturally-based enterprise development to strengthen rural economies;** SAC and KRC support directing significant resources into programs that will enhance development of local and regional food production. Programs that serve producer needs for marketing and business development such as the Value-Added Producer Grant Program, Farmers’ Market Promotion Program, and Organic Certification Cost-Share, and Organic transition payments, should receive greater emphasis.

*** Addressing in a comprehensive fashion the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers;** the average age of farmers is well over 50; fewer young people are entering farming; SAC and KRC support incentives to encourage the next generation of farmers and especially those wanting to enter local/regional food production.

The timing of the report and report card coincides with an election-season break in the debate on the 2007 Farm Bill. That debate is anticipated to accelerate early next year when the new congressional session begins. Both chambers of Congress have already held a series of hearings on the direction of the next farm bill.

“Citizens should start dialogue with their Congressmen about the farm bill,” said Dan Nagengast, KRC Executive Director. “The next Congress should head back to Washington ready to break the cycle of business as usual with the next farm bill and set about to do a much better job of aligning policy with public support for family farms, the

environment, and nutrition needs.”

In its “Farm Bill Report Card” the Coalition gave failing or low grades to both the Congress and the Administration for their repeated actions to channel the limited funding promised in the 2002 Farm Bill for conservation, research and rural development into other, ill-advised uses. Both branches of government were also downgraded for making these cuts while not taking any action to stop the million dollar production subsidy checks to mega farms at the expense of family farmers, taxpayers and the environment.

The Report Card and an Executive Summary and a Synopsis of Key Recommendations plus the full text of **No Time for Delay: A Sustainable Agriculture Agenda for the 2007 Farm Bill** are posted at www.msawg.org //www.msawg.org . KRC’s website also has a link to the report.

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition represents grassroots farm, rural, and conservation organizations from across the country that together advocate for federal policies and programs supporting the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources and rural communities.

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) is a non-profit research, education and advocacy organization promoting a sustainable agriculture and food system. KRC is a member of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. □



K-State Extension's Gary Kilgore talked on the benefits of stockpiling fescue at one of the tour stops. One of the benefits is that cattle stay on pasture longer, and thus spread their own manure, reducing winter feeding area problems.



Connie Robinson, District Forester, described ways to improve a timber stand. The Bradley's have a pasture with significant timber just north of the feeding area. Photos by C. Pantle.

Bradley tour...

Continued from page 5

Will Boyer explained how mud is detrimental to animals by causing loss of production and providing an environment for disease and pests such as stable flies to flourish. With the new feeding site, manure and wasted hay can easily be scraped, removed and applied to pasture.

"Upgrading the lot where they feed their cattle will reduce mud during the winter time. Timely removal of the manure in the spring allows the Bradley's to incorporate the manure into a soil fertility plan and reduce the risk of manure runoff into streams," explains KRC's Jerry Jost.

Bradley also had a need for water in pastures that did not have a water source. So he developed a portable solar pumping system on a trailer. The pump and tank can be moved from pasture to pasture to utilize water from ponds throughout the pasture system. The pump and tank can be moved from pasture to pasture as the cows are rotated.

Gary Kilgore, KSU Extension agronomist, illustrated the benefits of stockpiling fescue for winter use as the Bradleys are doing. The method costs less than feeding hay and provides the cattle with sufficient nutrition. Kilgore explained the ideal way to utilize stockpiled fescue is to flash graze.

In flash grazing, the cows are kept on a section of the fescue for just a few days. Then, he said most farmers "leap frog" electrical fence and turn the cows into the next section of pasture to graze, continuing until the fescue has been utilized. A narrow walkway on one end allows the cattle access to the water source, which in this case is the frost-free waterer below the pond.

"Stockpiling fescue allows the Bradleys to keep their livestock out longer on pastures in the winter. This means their cattle will be spreading more of their manure across the pastures. Strip grazing the pastures will help distribute the manure as well," Jost said. These changes are

important because they reduce hay feeding which improves profitability and lessen the risk of manure runoff from seasonal feeding areas, explained Jost.

Another part of the CWFPP cost-share was used to install the frost-free waterer below the Bradley's pond. To supply water for the cattle, a 50 gallon gravity-fed concrete tank was installed below the pond. The waterer is surrounded by the same geotextile fabric and rock as the feeding pad. Following installation of the waterer, the pond was fenced to prevent cattle from wading in the pond and to eliminate contamination from manure.

Bradley also received cost-share through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) through Douglas County NRCS which Clyde Mermis, Douglas County District Conservationist, explained at the beginning of the tour.

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Bradley farm tour...

Continued from page 1

One major obstacle that the Bradley's encountered was a ledge of rock when digging the line from the pond to the waterer. It took a man three days using a jackhammer to break through the rock. "That happens," said John. "We didn't know we'd run into something like that!"

Another obstacle was finding the vendors for supplies such as the solar panels, geotextile fabric, and waterers. John said they went all over the region searching for supplies for the projects. Therefore, John invited the vendors to the tour so that farmers could find the supplies they may need to make similar improvements on their own farms.

Throughout the tour, the speakers helped illustrate why John is making changes on his farm. Ryan Neises, Watershed Forester, explained the benefits of forested riparian buffers along side streams and creeks. Ryan recommends fencing the riparian areas to "keep cattle out so they don't destroy the understory and compact the soil." While Ryan focuses on forest buffers, he said "grass buffers provide the same benefits." He also explained the process of using willow tree cuttings, which will root themselves, to stabilize the stream-banks.

The Bradley's have a pasture with a significant timber just north of the winter feeding area. A year ago, 70 to 75 trees were harvested out of this timber. Connie Robinson, District Forester, described the ways to improve a timber stand. Connie said a crown tree release, where competing trees are cut down, improves the conditions and opens up

the area for the best tree to flourish.

North of the timber, John has a pasture that is currently fescue. John plans to return the pasture to native grass. Walt Fick, KSU Range Management Specialist, explained the best way to do this is to kill the fescue and then sow native grass seed. Walt also noted that you should check on your seed source to ensure that the seed is strictly a native grass mix, and is weed-free.

Because improving wildlife habitat is also a goal of the Bradley's, Mike McFadden, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) biologist, spoke at the tour. He said that this region was once tallgrass prairie and was very varied, and that this needs to be considered when improving wildlife habitat.

"John is always looking for ways to improve his management so that he can more easily reach his goals for the farm," stated Jerry Jost. "He is a good partner with many different organizations and is very willing to share what he's done with other farmers."

The tour was organized by Bill Wood, KSU Extension agent for Douglas County. Tour sponsors included the Kansas Rural Center, Douglas County Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Douglas County Livestock Association, Douglas County Farm Bureau, Kansas Forest Service, Kansas Graziers Association, and Kansas State University Research and Extension, Douglas County. □

Long Farm Tour....

Continued from page 7

During the tour, Jim elaborated on CSP as well as other funding sources available. David Hallauer, K-State Extension Agent for Jefferson County, explained soil testing on Oren's farm and the results. "The pH is optimal," he said.

For a virtual tour of Oren Long's ranch, go to:

www.kansasmuralcenter.org/publications.html

In addition, KRC's Jerry Jost, explained the benefits of completing the River Friendly Farm notebook, an environmental assessment tool, for producers wanting to make management and other changes in their operations.

Oren concluded the tour by summarizing his philosophy of farming with nature with words written nearly 100 years ago by John Burroughs in a piece titled "The Divine Soil", "Look beneath your feet!" □



Sustainable Ag. Conference... *Continued from page 1*

farmers may be found among their ranks. For consumers, sessions address the link between human health and nutrition. The conference also continues to focus on environmentally sound and sustainable production systems.

Featured speakers include Jimmy Daukus, American Farmland Trust; Mark Muller, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; Rich Pirog, the Leopold Center; Ginette Ishimatsu, University of Denver; a panel of presenters from Marshalltown, Iowa, who work with immigrant farmers; Dawn Thilmany, Colorado State; and lots of nuts and bolts workshop featuring Kansans involved in making these systems work. Workshop topics include developing farmers' markets, grassfed beef production and marketing, farm business planning, and opportunities in organic production.

Friday evening Feb. 17, Jim French, Oxfam America's lead farm policy organizer, will present a slide show on Sustainable Agriculture in West Africa at 7:30 p.m. followed by discussion.

The full conference agenda and brochure will be available after the first of the year. It will also be available at www.dce.ksu.edu/sustainableag/ later this year. Registration will be \$40 for one day with early registration by Feb. 2, 2007 and \$50 for late registration after Feb. 2; and \$80 for 2 day early registration by Feb. 2, 2007; or \$100 for late registration.

Mark your calendars now! □

Moran Meeting... *Continued from page 9*

rotations, and encouragement of forestry, horticulture, and limited tillage practices. However, the group cautioned that ethanol and biodiesel production, which is receiving lots of attention and investment, be done in such a way that soil and water resources are not abused.

The final topic discussed was nutrition programs and needs of Kansans. KRC heads up Governor Sebelius' Food Policy Council which serves as a vehicle for coordinating government and private sector interests in all food related issues: hunger and nutrition, health, local and regional food production, and food security.

According to KRC's statement to Moran, "Recent studies show that two-thirds of Kansans and 11 percent of children in grades 6-12 are overweight. One in eight Kansas households experiences food insecurity each year. Kansas currently ranks 7th among the states for household hunger with the rate twice as high for households with children. By supporting a more diverse agriculture with increased local and regional food production, we increase the opportunities for better nutrition and increased availability."

The meeting closed with the request for another follow-up meeting perhaps next spring or summer. Rep. Moran indicated he was also working to bring a House sub-committee hearing on farm bill issues to Kansas, possibly next spring. □

Coal Plant Testimony... *Continued from page 3*

There is a greatly elevated, yet still growing, understanding of the environmental consequences of coal-fired energy production. Though known to the scientific and public health community, it has found its way to the popular press.

Time magazine on Sept. 11 carried an article on rising mercury levels and its accumulation up the food chain. It noted that a dozen state governments are enacting mercury controls of their own beyond the federal government standards. Coal-fired electrical plants were identified as a major culprit.

The September 2006 **Scientific American** goes into great detail on the consequences we face if we continue on the course that we are debating right here, right now. Here's a statement for you to savor: "Over their roughly 60-year life spans, the new (coal) generating facilities in operation by 2030 could collectively introduce into the atmosphere about as much carbon dioxide as was released by all the coal burned since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution." This is so-called "clean coal".

I submit that the decisions about how much mercury, nox, sox and greenhouse gases is permissible to the American public is about to be reviewed. I don't think the liberal permit levels that we have now, come anywhere near what we are going to see in the near future as they are tightened down, and beyond that, where we need to be.

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Coal Plant Testimony...

Continued from page 13

I also think that the present U.S. administration's reluctance to sign Kyoto, or indeed acknowledge the almost global consensus on global warming due to green house gases, is about to become an artifact.

There are 153 U.S. coal fired plants being fast-tracked by utilities in this country. Kansas has several, while states like Texas have many more. A July 21, 2006 **Wall Street Journal** article entitled "As Emission Restrictions Loom, Texas Utility Bets Big on Coal" details how, though many utility companies now accept that coal-fired plants contribute to global warming, their response has been to speed the way through the permitting process in order to beat coming restrictions. The article details the efforts of a Dallas-based utility, TXU Corp., racing to build 11 plants before regulators can act. Precisely the wrong thing to do.

Understanding that constructing many new coal-fired plants, even though each may effectively comply with permit requirements, can in the aggregate overwhelm ecosystems and seriously harm air quality for downwind residents is not rocket science. Actually it is fourth grade math.

Large populations lie downwind of these plants. They can expect to host smog, acid rain, increased mercury levels and other pollutants in addition to the adverse effect on the global climate caused by increased release of green house gasses. Despite these plants ability to come into "compliance" for permitting purposes, the net effect is greatly increased pollution. How we got to the point

where we are compelled to argue within the confines of this illogic can only be described as regulatory failure. The blame rests squarely on society as a whole, (us) and those we've elected to protect us. But the energy companies have it within their power to do the right thing also. I will leave them to explain why they do not.

But that brings me to my second issue. Building these plants and the others being fast-tracked will effectively saturate the grid for many, many years with polluting energy. They not only doom us to increased pollution, they prevent investment in nonpolluting energy sources, such as wind. The European Union has a target of 22% renewable energy by 2010, much of that wind, and they are on track to reach it. Kansas has an enormous wind resource, ranked third in the United States. Building excess, commercial coal-fired capacity takes our one renewable hope off the table for the rest of my life time and most of my children's'.

Let me reiterate. Building these plants, from an air quality perspective takes us down a path of increased pollution, possibly at a disastrous level, and it co-opts any opportunity for remediation through development of clean energy technology. I urge you to deny these permits as written.

*Dan Nagengast, Executive Director,
Kansas Rural Center*



Farm Management Conference for Women Scheduled

A farm management conference for women is scheduled for February 9-10 in Hutchinson. With the theme, "Moving Agriculture Women Forward" the sessions will focus on risk management and business strategies in effective farm management.

While many women choose careers in agribusiness, others may marry into agriculture or become landowners with little if any background in farm life or management, stated Charlie Griffin, of KSU Research and Extension's School of Family Studies and Human Services. The conference for women aims at creating an environment where women can ask questions without intimidation and gives the women a chance to network with women facing similar concerns.

Twenty break-out sessions and a resource fair make up the program. The cost to attend the two day program is \$65. if registration is received by February 1. The late registration fee is \$80 and a single day registration is \$50.

A full conference registration includes one breakfast, two lunches, a dinner and conference materials. The conference will be held at the Grand Prairie Hotel and Convention Center, 1400 North Lorraine St. in Hutchinson which is offering a discount rate. Some scholarships also are available. For more information contact 1-866-327-6578 or www.womenmanagingthefarm.info.

The conference is sponsored by a number of organizations including KSU Research and Extension and the Kansas Rural Center. □

Board Member Profile: Meet Bob Mulch

Whiting, KS - KRC board member and president Robert "Bob" Mulch was born and raised on the south edge of Scott City in western Kansas. He now lives in a farmhouse that was once his grandfather's on an 800 acre farm northwest of Scott City.

In addition to farming, Bob, who obtained his law degree from Washburn School of Law in 1966, has served as the municipal court judge for Scott City for the last 18 years. Early in his career, Bob also worked as a prosecutor for the City of Wichita.

Bob's life has been largely defined by health issues. In 1964, Bob learned he had melanoma. He vowed that if he survived, he would travel the world. At age 32, Bob did so, visiting 35 foreign countries over the next eight years. While traveling, Bob said he immersed himself into the societies, staying with families in each region. "I thought of myself as a traveler not a tourist," he said.

By traveling he was able to see how hard people worked, often visiting farms and farm families.

Because of this, Bob feels that he adds a different perspective to the board of KRC. "My travels allow me to look at the world differently," he said. "It broadened my horizon."

Bob's wife Glenda died a few years ago at the age of 49 following a long bout with a rare neurological illness, deepening Bob's interest in health related issues. Following Glenda's death Bob was instrumental in getting a health study of cancer and neurological disease cases in his community.

During his wife's illness and following her death, Bob was the primary care giver for his two sons, Morgan, now married and living in Olathe, and Evan now living in Cincinnati, Ohio. Bob says he relied on family members to help care for his children and was thankful to have them nearby. "Many people don't have their extended family nearby and we did. The boys' grandmother helped raise them and I am grateful for that," he said.

Bob feels that growing up on a farm taught his sons responsibility. He said they learned to work at a young age. According to Bob, children raised on a farm see the work their parents are

doing. "When you work in a city, children aren't part of that," he said. "They saw me work on equipment and handed me tools at an early age."

Bob said he became familiar with KRC in the early 1990's and saw KRC's interest in rural communities. He said that he supports the mission statement of KRC and its goals. "I certainly see that viable family farms are a great asset to our country."

Bob said that Congress needs to be made aware of what is happening in rural America as family farms disappear. "If we don't start doing something, the rural communities will be destroyed," he said. "When the land is in a few hands, it is destructive to democracy." □

Winter KRC Board Meeting Set

Saturday February 3, 2007 is the date for the winter KRC board of directors meeting. The location will be announced later but will be in the Manhattan area. Fred Cholick, Dean of Agriculture at KSU, has agreed to be the luncheon speaker. More details will be available later. □



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Calendar

Saturday, December 2 "Feeding Kansas City" 2006 Conference, Kaufman Conference Center, Kansas City, MO For more information, contact Katherine Kelly or Ted CArey at the Growing Growers Training Program at 913-488-1270, or www.growinggrowers.org.

Wednesday-Thursday January 17-18, 2007, Kansas WRAPS Conference, Sponsored by KDHE. For more information, contact Jaime Gaggero, at 785-296-5579, or jgaggero@kdhe.state.ks.us.

Saturday, January 20, 2007, Kansas Graziers Association Winter Grazing Conference, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Assaria, Ks. For more information, contact Mary Howell,

785-363-7306, or marshalcofair@networksplus.net.

Friday-Saturday, February 2-3, 2007, Sustainable Food System Conference, Kansas City, MO. Sponsored by KC Food Circle, and others. For more information contact Ben Kjelshus, 816-767-8873, or bkjelshuz@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday, February 3, 2007 Kansas Rural Center Winter Board Meeting, Location TBA. For more information, contact Diane Dysart 785-873-3431, or ddysart@rainbowtel.net.

Tuesday, February 16-17, 2007, Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Conference, "The Well-being of

Rural Kansas: Healthy People, Healthy Environment, and Healthy Economies", KSU Alumni Center, Manhattan, Ks. Agenda and registration information available later. Check the KRC website, or call our office at 785-873-3431.

Please check the KRC website for updated calendar and announcement information at:

www.kansasruralcenter.org

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