Sustainable Agriculture: A Once and Future Vision
KRC 2014 Farm & Food Conference & 35th Anniversary Celebration
November 7 & 8, 2014
at the
Four Points Sheraton
Manhattan, Ks.

Featuring Keynote Speakers:
Fred Kirschenmann, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; and Ricardo Salvador, Union of Concerned Scientists; and
35th Anniversary Celebration Dinner Friday evening Nov. 7, with Keynote Speaker Bryan Welch, Mother Earth News

See page 9-12 for complete agenda and registration form. Also register online at:
www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/conference-2014

Come join us for one day or two, or just the celebration dinner.

We'll have national speakers and Kansas grown experts hosting workshops, book signings, a silent auction, and opportunities to network with farmers, ranchers, stewards and conservationists, and others interested in a sustainable food and farming future for Kansas.

For more information, contact: info@kansasruralcenter.org or call any staff member at 866-579-5469

KRC Announces
Move: New Address.
Telephone and Fax
by Julie Mettenburg

As the old saying goes, times change—and organizations change with them. KRC has reached one of those times!

In response to new staff locations and technologies that allow for more office flexibility, KRC is closing its longtime office at Whiting. Effective October 1, KRC will use a centralized Topeka postal address and a centralized, toll-free “866-” phone and fax number that features direct extensions for each staff member.

New contact information:
Telephone: 866-579-5469
Mailing Address:
Kansas Rural Center
4021 SW 10th Street #337
Topeka, KS 66604
info@kansasruralcenter.org

“As with any business or organization, we must be prudent and look for the most efficient means of operations at the best costs,” said KRC president of the board Joy Lominska. “With staff located across the state, and new technologies linking them, we had to admit that keeping the overhead of a centralized office that wasn’t so central was hard to justify. Therefore, the board of directors has decided to close our longtime ‘bricks and mortar’ location in Whiting.” Contd. on page 3
From the Director

A Once and Future Vision for Kansas

by Julie Mettenburg

As we celebrate the major milestone of KRC’s 35th anniversary year, we have engaged some of the most intriguing people working in farming and food today, for our upcoming 2014 Farm & Food Conference and 35th Anniversary Celebration.

For me, the conference will cap a year of what one could only call bucket-list moments, spent with some of the world’s leading - and most controversial - voices in farming and food.

In the spring, I joined Cultivate KC for a morning with food sovereignty activist Vandana Shiva. For my summer vacation, I traveled to London for the Savory Institute’s “Putting Grasslands to Work” International Conference. Then I accompanied ecologist Allan Savory and a small group of grasslands managers to Zimbabwe to see Holistic Management in practice. And, while in London, I shared a double-decker bus seat and a conversation with farmer-activist Joel Salatin, the Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal author from Polyface Farm.

Here are a few conversation starters from the global ag scene:

Today’s ag science is not your grandpa’s ag science. Far from being “backwards,” ecological farming of today is on the forefront, utilizing cutting-edge technologies. The Savory Institute unveiled a global grasslands ecology database, in which farmers from Kansas to Turkey to Patagonia will be able to enter data about range and plant conditions measured at the same GPS locations in pastures year after year. The data will help them improve their land, learn from others globally, and work with scientists interested in holistic ag systems.

More scientists are working on the challenge of systems, which are inherently hard to reduce down to controlled variables. Noted scientists from fields like soil, range and meat science are engaging in interdisciplinary teams with sociologists, ecologists, geographers and more. The Soil Carbon Cowboys project is an example of a research collaboration of scientists from Arizona State, partnered with the World Bank and a filmmaking team to work with practitioners across North American to test claims about holistic systems’ impact on soil carbon sequestration, methane emissions and more.

Technology will not save the day where biological solutions are needed. A driving force behind galvanizing of new partnerships is an increasing global recognition that technology is not going to solve all of our problems - not for food, not for climate, and not for people. Technology will offer some solutions, such as how to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, but there are problems for which biological, ecologically based answers are needed. Savory’s biological, holistic land management system is a Virgin Earth challenge finalist among a raft of technological solutions like air scrubbers.

Despite the current techie fascination with laboratory-invented meats, global public health advocates Bill and Melinda Gates are engaging in dialogues about the role of sustainable agriculture in feeding the world, as is Howard Buffett, whose father, Warren, has invested heavily in grasslands in South America.

Third-alternative collaborations are replacing old-school conflict. Globally, the hard-line stances over issues like climate change, “feeding the world,” and technology are giving way to cooperation and solution-finding. Staunch conservationists like the Nature
Conservancy are partnering with graziers, companies who use their products, and researchers from disciplines like range and soil science to determine the proper role of livestock in healthy ecosystem management.

New paradigms for nongovernmental organizations are also driving change. The Virgin Earth Challenge will award a $25 million prize to the most viable proposal for removing carbon from the atmosphere. To evaluate the proposals, the Challenge is vetting them through teams of MBA’s, economists, scientists and other experts. Community is the unit in which change will occur. In Zimbabwe, we saw land restoration borne of small tribal communities coming together to create a greater vision for a restored watershed and greater economic possibility through regenerative agriculture. These efforts require sophisticated facilitation and setting aside of old ways, old conflicts, old beliefs.

We are also seeing this in Kansas. KRC’s Community Food Solutions project has taken us into communities across the state, where local leaders and citizens are working to create task forces to improve their food, health, community and well-being. Small groups of farmers are coming together around the state to share knowledge and experiences building soil health with cover crops and crop rotations to build diversity. Another group is exploring a cooperative meat processing venture.

Dr. Shiva related that food is a powerful driver of change worldwide -- coalescing social and environmental change movements -- because it is local. It’s tangible and it provides access to action that today’s politics, driven by power-brokers, does not. As the saying goes, through community food, we are able to think globally, but act locally.

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KRC Changes Underway...

Continued from page 1

Added Executive Director Julie Mettenburg: “New technology has allowed us to invest and update with networked phone systems across distances, video meetings and chats, and utilization of vendors statewide, which KRC had already begun to implement. Empowering employees to work from any community in Kansas, in support of the mission of the Kansas Rural Center, makes a lot of sense.”

Current staff members work in locations from Great Bend to Lawrence, and utilize home offices as well as community office spaces and services. KRC also anticipates savings in fuel, paper and other resource use. Lominska pointed out, “This is also an opportunity to model the mission of sustainability, which we are always looking to do.”

“For 35 years, Whiting has been home base for KRC,” stated Mary Fund, Programs and Policy Director and founding staff member and long time KRC employee. “Closing the office marks the end of an era, but new technology allows us to work from anywhere in Kansas and still be in touch with each other and the information central to the organization’s operation and to our efforts as a team. Maintaining a central office no longer makes sense.”

“Our number one concern is making sure that we remain as accessible to all of you as we have always been,” Fund explained. “The new phone number should actually put callers in touch with the staff more quickly and directly than the current one!”

Beginning October 1, the KRC address, phone number, and general e-mail inquiry address are:

KANSAS RURAL CENTER
4021 SW 10th Street #337
Topeka, Kansas 66604
866-579-5469
info@kansasruralcenter.org

The website remains the same at:
www.kansasruralcenter.org

Phone calls and mail to the Whiting phone number and post office box will be forwarded to the new centralized phone and new address.

We strongly encourage you to start using the new phone number and address. Staff direct e-mails are also published in this issue on page 2.
Kansas at the Crossroads: 
Elections Matter. Elections Count 
by Paul Johnson & Mary Fund

Kansas is at a crossroads. The state has embarked on a generational experiment of eliminating the income tax—a move that could threaten fundamental ‘core services’ involving education, transportation, social services, public health and public safety.

What is the future for funding public education? What damage will be done to the social service safety net? What happens to the medically uninsured and the medical providers serving the uninsured? What reductions will be made to water quality and water supply opportunities and protection? Will agricultural policy continue to favor corporate factory farms via tax breaks over independent, diversified family farms? Will Kansas expand local and regional food production and lower the dependence on imported food? Will Kansas find that right balance of essential revenues and ‘future investment’ public services?

KRC proposes that as you listen to campaign speeches and debates, and suffer through the claims made in all the interminable ads on radio and television, that you keep the following questions in mind. And whenever you get a chance, engage the candidates—gubernatorial and for the Kansas House of Representatives—in these and related questions. Also engage your friends and neighbors in discussions about these issues and make sure that you know where the candidates stand on these questions so critical to our future.

If the Kansas Budget has a deficit of $237.8 million by June 30, 2016 as projected in August by the Kansas Legislative Research Department, what actions will you take?

The ABC’s of the Kansas Budget are fairly easy. 50% of the budget is spent on K-12 public education. With the school funding formula under intense scrutiny by the Kansas Supreme Court, it seems unlikely that significant cuts to school funding will be allowed. 20% of the Kansas Budget is spent on social services with 90+% of this spending on Medicaid—now called KanCare. Caseloads continue to increase. The most realistic goal of the three private managed care companies is to just lower the increase in medical care costs. 15% of the Kansas Budget is spent on higher education. Higher education has taken many reductions in the last five years while the demand for a better educated workforce increases and tuition costs have soared.

The final 15% of the Kansas Budget funds everything else from prisons to parks to public health departments to water programs.

On the revenue side, significant growth in sales tax revenues and exponential growth in employment must occur quickly to offset the eventual elimination of the income tax that funded 30% of the Kansas Budget in the past. Cities and counties are caught in this revenue experiment. State government promises to assist local governments with revenue sharing for roads and to offset the loss of property tax on business machinery have been forgotten.

Sales tax and property tax are the primary funding sources for cities and counties. These are the most regressive taxes compared to the state income tax. To maintain essential public services and offset declining revenues from the State, cities, counties and school districts may have no choice but to increase sales and property taxes while state lawmakers forsake and deny any responsibility.

Should the 50-Year Vision for Water in Kansas be primarily water supply oriented or primarily a conservation and stewardship plan?

Water resource issues will become increasingly important in state politics. In October 2013, the State launched an effort to develop a “50-Year Vision Plan for Water In Kansas”. The Kansas Department of Agriculture and Kansas Water Office staff spent much of the last year traveling the state meeting with stakeholders—that is you and me— to solicit input for this plan.

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Congress Faces Critical Farm Decisions Post November Elections
by Mary Fund

Compared to the 2013 September circus of government shut-down and breath holding tantrums, passage of the Continuing Resolution came and went almost quietly this year. By Sept. 18, both the House and Senate passed a short-term funding extension known as the Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the federal government through December 11, and sent it to the president for signature. This includes critical funding for agricultural and conservation programs.

What happens when Congress returns after the November elections is anybody’s guess and will be impacted of course by the election results. They can kick the can down the road a little further with another extension. They could combine all 12 of the appropriations bills for FY 2015 (which begins October 1) into one package known as an omnibus appropriations bill. They could pass some appropriations bills separately and they could pass more CR’s for other more controversial, difficult programs.

For agriculture, the House and Senate need to come to terms on the differences in the two appropriations packages they passed. According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), there are “four important appropriations decisions that will have a major impact on farmers, food and the environment.”

**Free speech rights for livestock farmers.** The agricultural appropriations bill passed by the House includes an anti-farmer, anti-free market rider that severely limits USDA’s ability to protect livestock farmers’ basic rights such as free speech and rights of association. The 2008 farm bill gave USDA the authority to write regulations to provide basic contract and dispute protections to farmers who do business with the big meat processing corporations. The corporations have been trying to get this removed ever since.

Only the House bill contains the rider, which is a way to legislate for what they could not get earlier, through the appropriations process. For background on the GIPSA rider, go to NSAC’s sustainableagriculture.net/blog/gipsa-rider-details/.

**Funding for critical conservation programs.** The House ag appropriations budget cuts $109 million from the Conservation Security Program, $209 from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and $60 million from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. The Senate bill would cut $250 million from EQIP but not the other programs.

The House bill would also slash the farm bill funding for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which helps farmers adopt renewable energy systems, by 40 percent— from $50 million to $30 million. All of these proposed cuts come at a time when climate change realities of floods, and drought, and erosion and water quality problems are front page news as soil health, water supplies, habitat, and communities are impacted. In contrast, there are no proposed cuts or limits proposed to commodity or crop insurance programs.

**Opportunities for beginning farmers.** The Senate Ag Appropriations bill includes $2.5 first time funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Program, which would provide limited-resource farmers with financial training and matched savings accounts so they can build assets and make needed purchases to get started in agriculture. Addressing the needs of first time farmers, or limited resource farmers, is critical given the exodus from farming and the average age of farmers in their late 50’s.

**Food Safety Training for Small Processors and Farmers.** Both House and Senate ag appropriations bills include first time funding for a Food Safety Outreach Program. It would provide limited-resource farmers with financial training and matched savings accounts so they can build assets and make needed purchases to get started in agriculture. Addressing the needs of first time farmers, or limited resource farmers, is critical given the exodus from farming and the average age of farmers in their late 50’s.

All of the above are vulnerable to any negotiations that go on regarding the appropriations budgets and any further CR’s. They are also vulnerable to the results of the November elections. To keep abreast we recommend visiting the NSAC website and subscribing to their updates-- with a helpful contribution toward their work in D.C.

(With help from the NSAC Weekly Updates. See: sustainableagriculture.net/blog)
Last spring and early summer over 120 Kansans attended four Farm-to-Fork Summits KRC hosted across Kansas. The day long summits in Greensburg, Iola, Concordia, and Colby focused on understanding specific policies that will help our state’s farmers help make healthful foods--especially fruits and vegetables--the easy, accessible, affordable choice for all Kansans.

Each summit offered presentations highlighting the importance of policy to make effective change, panels discussing unique perspectives in each region and open dialogue roundtables around specific policy levers affecting farms and food systems in Kansas.

The effect on local farm and economic development was heavily considered during each summit. Key themes included producers supports needed to increase production of fruits and vegetables, water conservation, and the development of community and regional farm and food task forces, cooperatives, farmers markets, food insecure resources, value added processing facilities and other farm and food systems segments.

Participants who attended the summits included seasoned and beginning farmers, and representatives of community health coalitions, economic development offices, K-State research and Extension, as well as health professionals, retail food business owners, and other advocates interested in the health of Kansans, farms and food systems. The diverse perspectives provided critical feedback necessary to assess the next steps needed in Kansas to advance sectors of our local food systems.

One of these next steps is KRC’s development of a Statewide Farm and Food Assessment and Policy Recommendations plan. This plan will outline the status of our current farm and food system, while providing the critical next steps needed to cultivate specific policies necessary to advance the Kansas farm and food system especially around fruit and vegetable production.

The recommendations will be substantiated through the feedback gained from over 250 state and regional partners, summit attendees and numerous one-on-one interviews from folks in all realms of the food system this past year.

The final plan will be released at the KRC’s 2014 Farm & Food Conference November 7 and 8. Those who attend the conference are welcome to join a special 90-minute session led by KRC staff and policy experts who will unveil the recommendations and offer advocacy advice and tips in response to the recommendations.

Attendees will have the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about the recommendations. The publication will not only seek to educate Kansans about current challenges and opportunities in the farm and food system, but will also be useful as a tool to help mobilize Kansans towards policy change.

This work is part of KRC’s three year “Community Food Solutions for a Healthier Kansas” initiative funded by the Kansas Health Foundation.

The project seeks to advance the farm-to-fork food system across the state. With the first year completed, KRC and their partners will engage and educate citizens and statewide public policy makers to advance the needs identified in the plan during the second and third years of the initiative. KRC will also train regional and local leaders in community food organizing to self-assess their needs and opportunities surrounding healthy food access via local farm production.

The recommendations laid out will provide Kansans the information they need to talk to local or state governments about making the changes recommended in the plan. However, talking to policy makers can be intimidating and knowing where to start can be hard to discern. In the spring of 2015, KRC will once again visit communities across the state to empower grassroots Kansans by providing basic local and state level policy and advocacy training to bolster changes in our farm and food system.

For more information about this initiative visit kansasruralcenter.org/community-food-solutions or contact Natalie Fullerton at nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org.
Prairie Conservation Strips Show Promise in Protecting Soil and Water

by Joanna Voigt

Strips of prairie grasses combined with monoculture crops are showing multiple benefits in Iowa fields.

The rising price of corn, soybeans, and wheat in recent years has led to a production intensification push in the Midwest and elsewhere, contributing to soil erosion, water quality problems, and threats to infrastructure. Accelerating environmental degradation caused by large-scale monoculture agriculture. As farmers rush to convert every available acre of land to annual row crops in an effort to increase yields profits, lands with great value to ecosystem function and health, such as field borders, riparian buffers, and prairie remnants, are plowed under. Short term gains in revenue come at a high price environmentally as loss of these remaining natural areas has significant and far-reaching impacts on water quality, soil health, and biodiversity.

At the local level, large-scale conversion of the landscape to monoculture agriculture, significantly decreases plant diversity and wildlife habitat; increases flooding; decreases soil quality and health; and negatively impacts water quality, increasing sediment and nutrients and leading to problems such as silting in of reservoirs and increased frequency of blue-green algae which can be toxic to livestock.

On a broader scale, large-scale monoculture agriculture results in decreased biodiversity and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Agricultural runoff from Midwestern states has been implicated as a primary contributor to hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. Hypoxia, or low oxygen, occurs when elevated levels of nutrients in the water spur excessive aquatic plant growth, depleting the available oxygen in the water and causing a “dead zone” in which the dissolved oxygen concentration is so low that the water can no longer sustain living organisms. The dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico is the second largest hypoxic zone on the planet, and has significant impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem health in the Gulf, as well as impacting livelihoods.

One practice showing potential for offsetting some of the negative impacts of large-scale, monoculture agriculture is being tested in Iowa and is producing exciting results. STRIPS, which stands for “Strategic Integration of Rowcrops with Prairie Strips,” is an ongoing experiment developed by researchers from Iowa State University, the USDA Agricultural Research Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service, at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa.

Results of the STRIPS project indicate that planting small areas of native prairie strips in strategic locations within agricultural fields can yield significant environmental benefits.

STRIPS are created by planting prairie strips, with a diverse mix of native prairie grasses and forbs, in strategic locations within row crop fields in order to catch runoff before it leaves the field. Deep-rooted native prairie plants create a buffer, which slows runoff, minimizes erosion, and sequesters nutrients and chemicals, protecting water quality both locally and downstream.

The STRIPS project has shown that planting as little as 10% of a row-cropped field to native prairie grasses and forbs can reduce sediment transport by 95%, phosphorus loss by 90%, and total nitrogen loss by 85%. Additionally, prairie strips increase plant diversity and support wildlife, bird, pollinator, and beneficial insect populations.

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Low tunnels (shown within a high tunnel above) were awarded to 13 specialty crop growers this fall as part of KRC’s “Tunnel to Table” Project geared at increasing the number of growers exploring how these can improve their production.

This year, a total 1,300 feet of free low tunnel infrastructure was awarded to 13 specialty crop growers across Kansas as part of the Kansas Rural Center’s "Tunnel to Table" educational programming - to increase the number of growers experimenting with low tunnels, which put to work the same simple technology as high tunnels for a fraction of the price. Low tunnels can provide a cost-effective investment option for those seeking to begin or advance their use of protected growing systems on their farms.

In recent years high tunnels have gained popularity and abundance across the Kansas landscape, but the lesser-known low tunnel offers an alternative form of crop protection and season extension that may work even better for some growers and in certain situations.

How do low tunnels and high tunnels differ? Structurally, low tunnels are essentially miniature versions of high tunnels. However, unlike high tunnels, low tunnels are too short to walk in, are moved seasonally, and lack much of the structural support offered by high tunnels. Another major difference is that the plastic on a high tunnel is attached to the structure, whereas plastic on a low tunnel is weighted down on the ground.

The cost difference between high and low tunnels is significant. Whereas high tunnels using half inch metal pipes and six mil. greenhouse-grade plastic cost two to three dollars per square foot, low tunnels with the same pipes and plastic cost just 30 to 60 cents per square foot. The cost drops to as little as five cents per square foot if metal wire and row cover - a breathable poly-spun fabric - are used instead.

Low tunnels and high tunnels are also used a bit differently. Unlike high tunnels, these low cost structures can be disassembled, moved throughout the farm, and work with the contours of the land. Similar to high tunnels, low tunnels can provide crops with several degrees of cold protection at night but, due to their smaller stature, low tunnels heat up more rapidly during the day. In Kansas’ climate, low tunnels may be covered in plastic from late October or early November through late February or early March, at which point the operator will need to remove the plastic. This is because, similar to high tunnels, low tunnels need to be manually ventilated if temperatures near 70 degrees, as they occasionally do in late fall and early spring.

Low tunnels and high tunnels each have their own unique set of challenges. Because you can't stand-up in low tunnels, you must partially remove the covering to access your crops which can make it difficult to harvest or weed in high wind, rain, snow, and sub-zero temperatures. Low tunnel construction and dismantling must be done annually and is labor intensive. Low tunnels are, of course, lighter, so Kansas farmers must take extra measures to ensure their low tunnel doesn’t end up in the neighbor’s tree line.

According to Johnny’s Selected Seeds - a company that sells low tunnel supplies and has done a lot to promote and advance the technology - growers in high wind areas need more than just sand bags to keep their low tunnel structures secure.

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KRC 2014 Sustainable Farm and Food Conference

2014 KRC Conference Set for
November 7 & 8 in Manhattan, Kansas:
Sustainable Agriculture: A Once and Future Vision

KRC invites farmers, ranchers, food enthusiasts, community advocates and more to attend its 2014 Farm & Food Conference and 35th Anniversary Celebration, Nov. 7 and 8, at the Four Points Sheraton, 530 Richards Drive (just off Ft. Riley Blvd) Manhattan, Kansas.

The conference, “Sustainable Agriculture: A Once and Future Vision,” will also celebrate KRC’s 35th Anniversary Friday evening Nov. 7 with a special dinner and activities. The conference program will focus on the future of agriculture, food, and community in Kansas and our region.

Conference keynote speakers include: Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow at Iowa’s Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and President of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in New York, who will speak on Friday about alternative paradigms for the future of agriculture.

Dr. Kirschenmann is a theologian, philosopher, farmer and leading voice in the dialogue about the challenges of modern agriculture and the pursuit of sustainable agriculture. He also manages his family’s 1,800-acre certified organic farm in south central North Dakota.

Ricardo Salvador, Senior Scientist for the Union of Concerned Scientists and Director of its Food & Environment Programs, will address the impact of global realities on the future of food on Saturday. Dr. Salvador works with citizens, scientists, economists, and politicians to transition our current food system into one that grows healthy foods while employing sustainable practices.

Dr. Salvador also taught the first course on sustainable agriculture at a land grant university, and chaired the nation’s first graduate program in sustainable agriculture.

Join us at the
Four Points Sheraton
530 Richards Drive
Manhattan, Ks.
(Just off Ft. Riley Blvd
near Seth Child)

for the
2014 Sustainable Farm & Food Conference
November 7 & 8, 2014
Detailed Information and Online Registration at:
www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/conference-2014 or see page 10-12.

Other conference speakers include Bob Dixson, Mayor of Greensburg, Kansas, who will explore perspectives on the development of healthy, sustainable communities, especially regarding the inclusion of sustainable farming and food. After a tornado devastated their community in 2007, Dixon and others led Greensburg to become a nationally recognized sustainable community. Dixon planted and tends the so-called “vacant lot vineyard” in Greensburg, and consults with communities around the country in times of crisis after natural disasters.

Hattie Mitchell, CPA and Treasurer of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, will share perspectives on the future of sustainable community food solutions and health within the Potawatomi Nation. Mitchell was a 2013 40 Under 40 recipient, an honor given to emerging American Indian leaders in Indian Country by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIxED) organization.

Julie Mettenburg, Executive Director of KRC, will address the question of who will farm in the future, and land stewardship in a time of transition. Mettenburg is involved in the transition of her family farm in Eastern Kansas from the third to fourth generation, and has been instrumental in moving the farm to grass-finishing and direct-marketing of meats.

Workshops. The conference will also feature over a dozen workshops each day providing inspiring ideas, helpful information and valuable connections for attendees, ranging from practical farm management, diversification and transition strategies, to community and food advocacy training. (See agenda page 10-11).

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KRC 2014 Sustainable Farm and Food Conference

2014 Sustainable Agriculture Farm and Food Conference
Agenda Friday November 7, 2014 at the Four Points Sheraton, Manhattan, Ks.

8:00 - 9:00 a.m. Conference opens; Registration
9:00 a.m. Welcome, Mary Fund, Program and Policy Director, Kansas Rural Center
9:15 a.m. Keynote: Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
“Alternative Paradigms for the Future of Agriculture”
10:15 a.m. Break / Silent auction opens

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Concurrent Workshops Session I
Building Soil Health Through Diversification: The Carbon Foundation
Soil health is a result of ecologically based practices:
multiple species cover crops, livestock/crop integration, and crop rotations. Presenter: Gail Fuller, Fuller Farms, Emporia, Ks.

Fruit & Vegetable Production: Promoting Soil Health and Water Conservation Strategies
Resilient and abundant crops are built from the ground up. Learn planning, production and equipment strategies to support soil health & irrigation and water conservation strategies. Presenter: Cary Rivard, KSU.

Saving and Creating Pollinator Habitat
Pollinator habitat is in decline worldwide including Ks. One in three bites of food we eat is pollinator dependent. Learn about the importance of pollinators and their habitat. Presenter: Holly Shutt, Wildlife Biologist, Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever

Growing for Farm to School
We will cover the status of farm to school programs in Ks., success stories, and new ideas that could increase the local food in school food programs. Presenter: Barbara Depew, KSDE; Nellie Hill, Ks. Department of Agriculture

Water in Kansas: An Alternative 50-Year Vision
Kansas officials will release a 50-Year Vision for Water in mid-November. So far it lacks a focus on sustainability, ecological systems, water quality and wildlife habitat. Join a panel of Kansas environmental & conservation representatives, farmers & others to discuss an alternative vision.

Noon- Lunch  Keynote Speaker Julie Mettenburg, KRC Executive Director
“Who Will Farm? The Future of Land Stewardship in a Time of Transition”

1:30-3 p.m. Concurrent Workshops Session II
Grazing Strategies for a Hotter Drier Climate
Learn how to meet livestock needs during the challenges of hotter, drier times. Presenters: Dale Kirkham and a panel of ranchers.

What Women Need to Know About Land, Leases, & Estate Planning Women will increasingly be land owners &/or farmers. Learn about estate planning basics, leases & working with tenants. Presenters: Forrest Burler, KAMS; Mykel Taylor, KSU

Small Fruits, Big Potential
Small fruits offer strong profits, but demand outweighs supply in Ks. We will highlight high demand small fruits and key information to support production. Presenter: Marlin Bates, KSU Ext.

Community Gardening
Communities-large and small-across the country are embracing use of vacant properties to increase production and accessibility of fresh local food. Presenter: Evelyn Neier, KSU

Political Landscape for 2015
With the election just past, it’s time to assess the political landscape at state and federal levels. Presenters: Paul Johnson, KRC; Bob Beatty, WU Political Scientist, Mark Tallman, KAS; Jeff Schahczenski, NCAT/NSAC

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Concurrent Workshops Session III
GMO Seed Challenges & Non-GMO Opportunities
Learn about weed resistance to the herbicides required to grow GMO crops, soil problems related to repeated use of the same herbicides, consumer health concerns, and how some farmers are switching to non-GMO’s and the growing market for non-GMO grain. Presenter: Ken Roseboro, Editor Organic and Non-GMO Reporter.

Crop Insurance for Specialty Crops, Organic and Diversified Farms
New federal crop insurance programs now have available coverage for the above kind of farms. Learn about these new options that no longer penalize a farm for being diversified. Presenter: Jeff Schahczenski, NCAT

How to Handle Cattle...Without Getting Handled
With the right tips, tools and technology, farmers & ranchers no longer have to rely on physical strength for effective & safe cattle handling. Learn new tips and tricks through lower stress cattle handling. Presenter: Lucinda Stuenkel, Sunny Day Farm, Palmer, Ks.

Farming with Limited Access to Land, Capital and Credit
Hear from experienced farmers who have advice and ideas for acquiring the resources you need to begin or continue farming, utilizing the resources surrounding you. Presenters: Ed Reznicek, Amerugti Farm & Gen. Manager Ks. Organic Producers; Hank Will, Editor Grit Magazine

Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Strategies for Adaptation
Whether you agree or deny climate change, the evidence shows weather patterns and agriculture are already impacted, and farmers are adapting. Come listen to the scientific evidence and discuss how to build resilience. Presenter: Dr. Chuck Rice, KSU & the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Schedule subject to change. For latest schedule and more complete workshop descriptions available check online at www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/conference
KRC 2014 Sustainable Farm and Food Conference

KRC 35th Anniversary Celebration Reception and Dinner
Friday November 7, at the Four Points Sheraton, Manhattan, Ks.
5:30-6:30 Social Hour, Reception, and Live Music, Author Book signing
7 p.m.- 9 p.m. Dinner
Introductory Comments: Dan Nagengast, former KRC Executive Director
Key Note: Bryan Welch, Editor & Publisher Mother Earth News
“Beautiful and Abundant: The Future of the Sustainability Movement”

Saturday November 8 Agenda

8:30-9 a.m. Registration
9 a.m. Welcome; Julie Mettenburg, KRC Executive Director
9:10 a.m. Keynote: Ricardo Salvador, Senior Scientist & Director of Food & Environment Program,
Union of Concerned Scientists “The Future of Food”

10 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m.-11:45 a.m. Concurrent Workshop Sessions IV

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<tr>
<th>STRIPS: Agro-ecology That Harnesses Prairie Power</th>
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<tr>
<td>Learn how Iowa research has shown how native prairie filter strips provide multiple conservation goals.</td>
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<td>Presenter: Matt O’Neal, Iowa State University</td>
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<th>Reduce Risk and Increase Yields with High Tunnels</th>
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<tr>
<td>This session will highlight innovative solutions for beating extreme and “normal” KS. weather extremes with plastic-covered tunnels. Presenters: Greg Garbos &amp; Dan Phelps</td>
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<th>Farming With Limited Access to Land, Capital &amp; Credit</th>
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<td>Hear advice and ideas from experienced farmers on how to acquire resources you need to begin or continue farming. Presenters: Ed Reznicek; Hank Will; and Jason Schmidt, dairy farmer</td>
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<th>Water in Kansas An Alternative 50-Year Vision</th>
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<td>Kansas officials will release a 50-Year Vision for Water in mid-November. So far it lacks a focus on sustainability, ecological systems, water quality and wildlife habitat. Join a panel of Kansas environmental &amp; conservation representatives, farmers &amp; others to discuss an alternative vision.</td>
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11:45 a.m. Lunch; Speakers/Discussion: The Future of Sustainability in Kansas– A Tale of Two Communities
Hattie Mitchell, Treasurer, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation and Bob Dixson, Mayor City of Greensburg, Kansas

12:45 p.m. Reflections on Sustainability: Looking Ahead 35 Years. Panel Discussion featuring
Fred Kirschenmann and Ricardo Salvador, and others.

2 p.m. Break

2:15 p.m. Concurrent Workshops Session V

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<th>Building Soil Health Through Diversification: The Carbon Foundation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Soil health is a result of ecologically based practices: multiple species cover crops, livestock/crop integration, and crop rotations. Presenter: Dale Strickler, Star Seed</td>
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<th>Organic Certification: The Why’s and How-to’s of Certifying Organic</th>
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<td>Join representatives of a certifying organization and independent organic inspectors to learn more about why and how to certify. Presenters: Jackie Keller, OCIA; Rachel Savage and Ib Hagsten, independent inspectors</td>
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<th>How to Market With Limited Time</th>
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<td>Hear from a panel of experienced fruit and vegetable farmers and others who have found ways to do marketing on top of production. Presenters: Lisa Roberts, Small Business Development Center; Bob Lominska, Hoyland Farm; Tonia Rupe, Lucky Star Farm</td>
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<th>Advocating for Action: A Plan for Growing the Farm-to-Fork System in KS</th>
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<tr>
<td>KRC will unveil its KS. Farm to Fork Food System Assessment and Plan with recommendations to strengthen our local food production &amp; access. Presenters: Julie Mettenburg, Natalie Fullerton, and Cole Cottin</td>
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4 p.m. Exhibit Hall Closes
4 p.m.- 5 p.m. Final Remarks and Close of Conference.
2014 Conference.... Continued from page 9

Social Hour /Reception and KRC Anniversary Dinner. KRC will also host a cocktail reception and 35th Anniversary Dinner Celebration on Friday evening November 7.

Bryan Welch, Editor and Publisher, Mother Earth News, will keynote the dinner. Welch, who raises cattle, sheep, goats and chickens on a 50-acre farm near Lawrence, will provide a vision for the future of the sustainability movement.

Welch is the author of Beautiful and Abundant: Building the World We Want, and will sign copies of his book to benefit KRC during a pre-dinner cocktail reception.

The celebration will feature live music, locally sourced food and beverages, and a silent auction featuring Kansas artisans, goods and service. The night will also include a book-signing to benefit KRC, featuring authors Bryan Welch, Hank Will, Jane Marshall of KSU, Joy Lominska of KRC, and more.

KRC welcomes sponsors and exhibitors for the conference, as well as local food and beverage donations and auction items. Contact Natalie Fullerton at nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org about displays or booths and sponsorships. Proceeds will benefit KRC’s future work in growing a sustainable farming and food system in Kansas.

Information on all of these opportunities can be found at kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/confence-2014.

KRC 2014 Farm & Food Conference And 35th Anniversary Celebration November 7th & 8th, 2014

Registration Form--- Deadline Monday November 3, 2014!
Thank you for your interest in attending our conference! Full conference information and online registration can be found at: www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/conference-2014

Please select which days you would like to attend:

- $ 55.00 - Conference-Friday, Nov. 7
- $ 55.00 - Conference-Saturday, Nov. 8
- $ 45.00 Dinner & Cocktail Reception Only –Friday Evening, Nov. 7
- $145.00 Both Days plus Dinner & Cocktail Reception

Payment: Total Enclosed: _________________________

- Enclosed check payable to KRC *Send to: KRC Conference 4021 SW 10th St. #337 Topeka, Ks. 66604
- Pay at Door by check or cash

Contact info (*required):
Name(s)* ____________________________
Company or org., if applicable* ____________________________
Address* ____________________________ City* ____________________________ State* ______ ZIP* ______
Phone* ____________________________ Email* ____________________________

Registration for each day covers lunch and snacks.

For Special Student Rate, contact Natalie Fullerton at nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org

Silent Auction
During the November 7 & 8th conference, KRC will hold a Silent Auction of donated items to raise funds for KRC’s programs. The following items will be available with more to be added:
- Photographs,
- Framed Artwork,
- Signed Books,
- Gift Baskets, Pottery,
- Jackets & T-shirts
- Chefs Table
- Wool and Knitted Hat
- Seed Basket & Jewelry
- Sculpture from Old Farm Equipment

During the November 7 & 8th conference, KRC will hold a Silent Auction of donated items to raise funds for KRC’s programs. The following items will be available with more to be added:
How Pastures Affect Climate Change
by Wayne White

According to a 2014 report by leading climate scientists, convened by U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the U.K.’s Royal Society, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has increased by 40% since pre-industrial times. More than half of this increase has occurred since 1970, and of all greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, carbon dioxide plays the most significant role in warming the Earth.

To curb the climate crisis, some policymakers and concerned citizens have recommended solutions such as renewable energy development, greater resource efficiency and cleaner cars. Land management deserves a spot on that list. How homesteaders and ranchers manage livestock and how they manage the pastures those livestock graze on plays a significant role in atmospheric carbon pollution.

Mainstream pasture-management practices seriously degrade pastureland worldwide. Among the damaging processes are plowing grasslands on highly erodible soils and slopes to plant annual crops, destroying diverse mixtures of native perennial grassland species to plant monocultures of domesticated grasses, overgrazing pastures, and failing to properly rotate grazing livestock. All of these practices reduce the carbon content of soils, thus diminishing soil productivity and exacerbating climate change.

Soil carbon is a central product of photosynthesis and an essential component of healthy soil. Pastures and soils are thus crucial “carbon sinks”. The science works like this: Plants extract carbon in its gaseous form (carbon dioxide) from the atmosphere, and combine the carbon with hydrogen and oxygen to form carbohydrates, which the plants then transport through roots and out to the soil, where fungi feed on the carbohydrates and deliver mineral nutrients back to the plants.

This invisible partnership between plants and fungi is the foundation of the terrestrial carbon cycle, as plants incorporate carbon from atmospheric carbon dioxide into carbohydrate biomass, both above and below the Earth’s surface. (Plant biomass averages an impressive 47 percent carbon by dry weight.)

Much of the carbon in stems, leaves and roots re-enters the atmosphere when plants decay, but a portion of it is stored in the soil. Soil carbon will be more secure and long-lasting the deeper carbon is buried, the less the soil is disturbed, and the more the soil is protected from sun, wind and water by perennial vegetative cover. Such protections prevent the carbon from releasing into the atmosphere. That’s also good for the land. Adequate soil carbon is essential for water and nutrient retention. Soils with high carbon content thus resist drought better and are more productive than soils low in carbon.

How does all this translate into smart livestock grazing? Management practices proved to sequester carbon in pastures are easy to implement, and have multiple ecological and economic benefits. Planting diverse mixtures of native or well-adapted perennial grasses and legumes eliminates the need for synthetic fertilizers and increases photosynthetic production compared with planting monocultures of domesticated grasses. However, planting some cool-season domesticated grasses, such as brome and fescue, in pastures can substantially extend the grazing season. Overall, think diversity.

Even in diversely planted pasturelands, though, grazing practices make a big difference. Overgrazing reduces carbon sequestration and productivity, but ranchers can avoid it with a rotational grazing system that incorporates multiple paddocks. Stocking density and rotation time depend on the season, the weather and the health of the soil.

A rough guide line is to move animals to a new paddock after they’ve consumed about half of the biomass, and then rest each paddock until new growth is evident. Following these guidelines to foster healthy pastures will store more carbon in the soil, thereby helping to ease global warming.

Reprinted with permission from Mother Earth News, June-July 2014. Wayne White raises grassfed beef in Jefferson County and is a KRC board member.

Learn more about Mother Earth News at www.motherearthnews.com.

For more smart land management see White’s book Sequestration and Ecological Diversity: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change, and Environmental Degradation available at CRC Press at http://goo.gl/D6YRrG.
Policy News

Political Questions... Continued from page 4

On July 1, they issued the first draft of the plan and will release a final plan November 12 at the annual Water and the Future of Kansas Conference.

The current draft is oriented to increasing water supplies to supplement or replace the declining Ogallala Aquifer and solving the problems of sedimentation in the state’s major reservoirs that provide water for population centers. The 35,000 water rights in Western Kansas are over-pumping the Ogallala by a factor of three to five times a sustainable rate. There are over 2 million acres in Western Kansas under center pivot irrigation growing feed grains – primarily corn. Loss of that water promises certain change to the economy built on non-renewable water.

A proposal to build an ‘aqueduct’ to transport overflow Missouri River water 300 miles to western Kansas is being given serious consideration and promotion from some western Kansas interests, although it would cost billions of dollars. Questions of who would pay and who would benefit loom large. Also how would this be viewed by other downstream states?

Such a transfer would start with examination of the state’s interbasin transfer law, looking for ways to streamline its implementation perhaps via smaller transfers, such as the one for the City of Hays from south central Kansas water rights.

The state reservoirs were built without sufficient upstream land management so now they are silting in faster than designed or expected. High grain prices the past 3 or 4 years have resulted in not only removal of grass buffer strips and planting right up to the stream banks, but a record amount of grassland and pasture acres have been plowed under for annual crop production. All of this increases the potential for erosion and sedimentation downstream.

No one has a realistic cost for dredging major reservoirs like Perry or Milford and how this would be funded. Since two-thirds of all Kansans draw municipal water from these reservoirs, water bills could increase substantially.

The current draft vision emphasizes protecting and building the economy by focusing on supply. But a vision emphasizing conservation and natural resource protection is just as critical because it too is a source of water supply and protects the quality needed for meeting economic needs. Factor in changing climate patterns, and planning and building expensive structural solutions becomes more complex. Conservation and learning to live within one’s water means may well be the challenge of the future.

Will you support full funding of the existing State Water Plan? Kansas has had a water planning process and a statewide water plan since 1985. By state law, the State Water Plan (SWP) should receive $6 million from the State General Fund and $2 million from the lottery funds annually but this funding has been deferred the last five years. The SWP has declined from $25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 to $14.9 million in FY 2015. The pesticide and chemical fees - that fund a portion of the SWP - are now frozen for the next three years. The Kansas Water Office has issued $25 million in bonds to start dredging John Redmond and fund cost-share soil sedimentation projects up stream but the payment for these bonds must now come out of a declining SWP. The result is continual reductions to existing water conservation and cost share soil management assistance programs. How can we discuss a 50-Year Vision Plan if we can’t or won’t fund the existing state water plan?

Will you support legislation to eliminate any restrictions on corporate farming in Kansas including the elimination of the county option to decide the siting of corporate swine and dairy confined animal facilities in their county? In the 2013 Kansas Legislative session, the Kansas Department of Agriculture proposed legislation to eliminate all restrictions on corporate farming in Kansas.

Kansas is one of eight states that have restrictions on corporate ownership of swine and dairy facilities without county commission or county voter approval. These restrictions apply to corporations such as Seaboard or Tyson but do not apply to family farm corporations. 19 counties in Kansas have voted to restrict corporate swine facilities, pointing to environmental and quality of life concerns for county residents. No counties have voted to restrict corporate dairies. Kansas had 5,600 dairies in 1980 and today there are 400 dairies with 20 mega-dairies having 65% of all dairy cows. Kansas had 13,500 hog farms in 1980 while today there are less than 1,400 hog farms with 311 large hog farms accounting for 95% of all pork sales.

Continued on page 15
Policy News

Would you support the retention, the expansion or the repeal of the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard? In 2009, the Kansas Legislature established a renewable energy portfolio standard (RPS) for the major electric utilities in Kansas. The RPS mandates that 20% of the peak electrical generating capacity will be provided by renewable energy by 2020.

Over the last five years, there has been significant expansion of large wind farms and the major electric utilities are all very close to meeting this standard. More expansion will come if the federal production tax credit for wind is renewed and the electricity grid is expanded to handle the new power production.

While industrial scale wind farms have received most of the attention, the expansion of solar electricity for homes and businesses is considerable. The cost of solar panels has declined dramatically. Solar companies and banks are now teaming up to offer affordable financing plans. The Kansas Legislature passed a new law establishing the rules and electric rates between the utilities and the home generator. The policy is called ‘net metering’ and it dictates the electric rates for home generators and the electric rates a utility will pay for extra power generated and sold to the utility.

Solar electric panels generate power on the hottest days when the extra power is most needed to offset air conditioning demands. Germany has been a great leader in solar energy and at times this past year solar energy supplied 75% of the nation's electric demand. Wind systems and solar panels require no water while fossil fuel plants are second only to irrigators in water demands.

Summary: The right to vote is fundamental. Elections must be a participatory exercise. Only 22% of the eligible voters cast a ballot in the August primary.

Of the 125 Kansas House members, 50 have already been selected in the primary or had no opponent. The remaining 75 Kansas House races will make a big difference in setting the agenda for the 2016 Kansas Legislative session. The 40 Kansas State Senators are not on the ballot until 2016 except for the filling of two seats of retiring Senators. The biggest battle will be over the statewide races and particularly the election of a Governor. The political and economic future of the state is before each voter. Elections count. Elections matter.

Paul Johnson can be reached at pdjohnson@centurylink.net.

Join KRC for Our Monthly Grazing Tele-Conference Call on the second Monday of every month
7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Hosted by Dale Kirkham and joined by KSU’s Gary Kilgore and Keith Harmoney, these informal discussions cover all aspects of grazing management.
Join the toll-free call by entering 1-877-304-5632 and enter the Conference room number: 300 346 2424#.
For more information, contact Dale Kirkham at 620-344-0202.

Prairie STRIPS...

The Iowa STRIPS project has shown that fields with 10% prairie plantings support twice as many bird species at three times the abundance as fields without prairie strips, the same abundance of pollinators as found in nearby native prairie patches, and 1.4 to 2 times the abundance of predatory insects that target corn and soybean pests as found in fields without prairie plantings.

Native prairie plants increase organic matter in the soil and improve infiltration, boosting soil health and helping to mitigate extreme precipitation events and changing climate conditions. Prairie strips can be managed to support grazing and can be hayed, although the per acre quantity of dried plant material is not exceptional. The cost to implement prairie strips is relatively low, at an average cost of $24 to $35 per acre, and the NRCS CRP program can reduce the cost to farmers by up to 80%, making prairie strips a cost-effective conservation measure.

For more information about STRIPS, visit the STRIPS website at www.prairiestrips.org, and plan to attend KRC’s Farm & Food Conference in Manhattan on November 7 - 8, 2014. STRIPS researcher, Matt O’Neal, Iowa State University, Department of Entomology, will be delivering a presentation on the STRIPS project on Saturday, November 8. For more information and to register for the conference, please visit http://kansusruralcenter.org/calendar/conference-2014/.

Joanna Voigt can be contacted at jvoigt@kansusruralcenter.org.
Low Tunnels...

Continued from page 8

Burying the edges is effective, but Johnny's also recommends putting in stakes on each side of the tunnel, offset, and crisscrossing rope over the length of the structure.

Appropriate crops for winter production in either type of tunnel include: spinach, kale, collards, chard, leeks, scallions, carrots, parsnips, cabbage, parsley and arugula. Many other crops may not survive the entire winter, but their season can begin much earlier and be pushed well beyond the first frost.

What is the potential for low tunnels in Kansas? “There is very little research or awareness out there about the potential of low tunnel production,” explains Dan Phelps, Tunnel to Table Activity Coordinator for KRC. “By increasing the number of growers experimenting with low tunnels in Kansas, we hope to increase our understanding of the unique possibilities these structures can offer in our state.”

Eliot Coleman, who is largely responsible for the advancements seen in low tunnel technology nationally, has spent decades perfecting his techniques, through trial-and-error. Whereas snow is the major challenge on his farm in coastal Maine, Kansas farmers are tasked with experimenting and finding creative ways to overcome the challenge of high winds.

Tobacco Road Farm in central Connecticut is a shining example of the potential of low tunnels. For the past decade, they have opted out of using high tunnels entirely, and strongly favored the benefits of low tunnel production. Low tunnels now cover more than an acre of their farm.

"The seeding dates for their winter and spring low tunnel crops are astonishingly late," writes Tracy Frish about Tobacco Road Farm’s capacity to harvest low tunnel crops year-round (Growing for Market, July 2006). "They continue planting through the beginning of December and start up again in February... Normally, harvest continues until Christmas and then resumes in March. The mild winter of 2005-06 allowed them to harvest at intervals in January and February as well."

The estimated annual operating cost for Tobacco Road Farm’s low tunnels is three cents per square foot - due to the fact that they use galvanized metal wire for hoops instead of metal hoops (they say the wire bounces right back from heavy snow loads) and they use two layers of one-and-a-half mil. construction-grade plastic (compared to the typical, heavier weight, more expensive, four to six mil. greenhouse grade plastic).

What are some low tunnel options for Kansans? As this Connecticut farm demonstrates, there are many options for low tunnels configurations - including using shade cloth, different thicknesses of row cover, or different types of plastic than the standard greenhouse plastic found on high tunnels. As is explained below, each configuration offers its own unique benefits.

Shade cloth can be used without plastic on low tunnels, to extend the season of cool season crops into the warmer months. This can be especially effective when combined with misters set on timers.

Low tunnels covered with row cover allow air and water to penetrate while providing several degrees of frost protection. Though row cover does not offer the daytime temperature increase that plastic covered low tunnels can provide, on sunny days it can be beneficial that no ventilation is required.

Using thick row cover on low tunnels can help give warm season crops a jump start in the spring and can help extend the growing season past the first frost, perhaps as late as water solstice (but not for overwintering crops). Thick row cover also protects crops from the wind, though additional measures must be taken in high wind areas to keep the row cover attached.

Thinner row covers offer little cold protection, but instead serve as physical barriers to insects - preventing pests like squash bugs and cucumber beetles from reaching the crop. However, many tunnel crops require pollination from beneficial insects. In these cases, the row cover is removed for pollination once the plants start flowering, at which time the plants are established enough to deal with some pest pressure.

Perforated plastic provides about as much frost protection as row cover but also provides much higher daytime temperatures - similar to those of greenhouse plastic. However, unlike greenhouse plastic, perforated plastic self-ventilates when temperatures reach a certain point and the slits in the plastic walls contract, allowing heat to escape.

Kansas high tunnel farms growing in the winter can also benefit from the additional warmth provided by low tunnels placed within the high tunnel. While a high tunnel with a single layer of plastic provides one hardiness zone of protection, adding a plastic covered low tunnel will provide one additional zone of protection. This combined low- and-high-tunnel method allows, for example, crops grown in zone 5 to be...
From the Director

Continued from page 3...

Low Tunnels....

Continued from page 16

grown in a climate controlled environment equivalent to zone 7 - which is like the equivalent of moving your operation from Topeka to Dallas!

The Kansas Rural Center asks growers with any experience using low tunnels or high tunnels, to complete the Kansas High Tunnel Survey located at www.kansasruralcenter.org/T2Tsurvey. Lessons learned from this survey will be integrated into informational Tunnel to Table publications, to be released later this fall.

The most up-to-date information on KRC’s Tunnel to Table program is available at: http://kansasruralcenter.org/category/tunnel-to-table/, or by contacting Program Coordinator Cole Cottin at ccottin@kansasruralcenter.org or 785-992-4572.

FDA Releases Draft Rules for Comment

The second public comment period on the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) revised proposed food safety rules will begin September 29, 2014 for a 75 day period ending in mid-December. The revised rules apply to farms growing fresh produce and the facilities that process food.

Originally issued in January 2013, the first proposed rules included requirements that would have put many small sustainable and organic farms out of business and damaged the growth of small local food enterprises.

Due to public input and outcry, the recently released proposals contain revisions that reflect FDA’s new thinking on critical issues such as water quality standards and testing; standards for using raw manure and compost; provisions affecting “mixed-use facilities” (farms that engage in value-added processing); and due process considerations for farms that are eligible for qualified exemptions from the new regulations.

You can find more information at FDA’s website at: http://www.fda.gov/Food/NewsEvents/ConstituentUpdates/ucm415132.htm. Or at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s website at: http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma/

(From NSAC, Sept. 19, 2014 http://sustainableagriculture.net)

Engaging youth in agriculture is the No. 1 challenge we face worldwide -- and nowhere more than Kansas. The prevailing economic models and “wisdom” have moved people off the land as efficiencies have consoli-

dated production and driven migration toward the cities. That strategy is coming home to roost with rural population decline.

The Census of Agriculture indicates that in Kansas, we have seen a 15% drop in new farmers over the past 5 years, whereas just over the state line in Nebraska, they have seen an uptick of nearly 10%. The age of the Kansas farmer is also older than the national average.

How do we reverse this trend? How can we care for our land without farmers? Who will own that land? In “Fields of Farmers,” Salatin presents a handbook for engaging young people and a model for farming that utilizes “enterprise stacking” to support multiple families on the land with limitless creative endeavors. As KRC promotes diversified farming systems, this is the potential we see for our future in Kansas.

Join the Conversation. The KRC conference will be a time to immerse ourselves in expansion of ideas, and work toward our own personal answers to these questions. In doing so, we engage in a global dialogue, yet also recognize that change occurs at the local level. We will chart our course forward as we celebrate our past.

We hope you will join us on Nov. 7 and 8 in Manhattan.

Julie Mettenburg can be reached at jmettenburg@kansasruralcenter.org.

Briefs

Julie Mettenburg with a Sizinda community leader in Zimbabwe last summer.

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(From NSAC, Sept. 19, 2014 http://sustainableagriculture.net)
House Votes to Stop Clean Water Act Rules

When Congress returned after its summer recess, the House of Representatives passed a bill (H.R. 5078) that would stop the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corp of Engineers from finalizing and implementing the proposed Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule. Back in April, EPA proposed the rule to clarify and define which bodies of water fall under the Clean Water Act. There currently are no plans for the Senate to consider the Act.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) prohibits the discharge of any pollutants, included dredged or fill material into “navigable waters” unless this is done in compliance with an authorized permit. Currently the CWA administers two permitting programs: NPDES or Section 402 that allows discharges of certain permitted activities (think industrial discharges and Confined animal feeding operations) and the Section 404 permitting program which allows discharge of dredge or fill materials into waters especially wetlands.

The intent of the proposed rule was to bring clarity to a process that all too often ended up in litigation due to confusion as to what constituted “all other waters”. Under the CWA, waters of the U.S. are defined as traditional navigable waters; interstate waters, and all other waters that could affect interstate or foreign commerce, impoundments of waters of the U.S., tributaries, territorial seas and adjacent wetlands.

Unfortunately, confusion still reigns with some farm organizations outright opposing the rule as a “power grab” by EPA, claiming that the way it is written, every depression or farm pond will now come under government regulation, and “farming as we know it will end.”

Others stated (with considerably less hyperbole) that the rule has not provided the clarity needed. They express concerns about specific language (such as considering wetlands, lakes and ponds as tributaries even if they have no bed, banks or high water marks) that could indeed create problems for farmers. But supporters of the rule argue that it is necessary to protect the quality if the nation’s drinking water.

They point to the algae blooms causing water crises across the country, like that experienced by Toledo, Ohio, which went without drinking water for several days. Or the spills in West Virginia last January that still worry residents as to the safety of their water.

While perhaps EPA did not provide the clarity they intended, this is still a rule in the comment making stage with opportunities for questions and recommendations. October 20 is the deadline for public comment. You can submit comments on the proposed rule at www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=EPA-HQ-OW-2011-0880, Docket No. EPA-HQ-OW-2011-0880.

You can find questions and answers on WOTUS on the National Sustainable Agriculture’s website at http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/waters-of-the-us-qa/.

USDA Announces Approval of New 2,4D Resistant Crops

USDA recently announced plans to allow Dow Chemical Company to begin marketing its new GM corn and soybeans, Enlist Duo, that is resistant to 2,4D. They also indicated they are leaning toward approving Monsanto’s new GM crops resistant to another herbicide, dicamba.

This is despite opposition from farmers, scientists and health professionals who have voiced concerns about the risks that accompany such a release. Agriculture had moved away from 2,4D, which is a highly toxic and drift prone herbicide in favor of what were believed to be more benign products. Now that critical problems are arising with weed resistance to the most commonly used herbicides like glyphosate (Round Up), the companies are returning to their arsenal of older stronger herbicides. Specialty crop farmers and organic farmers fear damages and crop losses if 2,4D comes back into heavy use.

USDA has acknowledged that if Dow’s GM seeds are approved, applications of 2,4D could increase by 200 to 300 percent by 2020.

According to the Center for Food Safety, “the biotech industry is about to repeat the same mistakes that got us into this predicament”. Agriculture experts warn that the weeds that became resistant to glyphosate will quickly become resistant to 2,4D and dicamba. (From The Organic & Non-GMO Reporter, September 2014)
Small Farmer Commentary

A New Chapter for KRC...
and for Sustainable Agriculture

by Mary Fund

I’ve spent much of the summer immersed in dusty boxes and old files as we clean out the “archives” for the Kansas Rural Center. Archives is a fancier term than “attic” which is where all our old files go to die. We are of course doing this because (see page 1) we are closing the Whiting office to move into a new leaner, more efficient phase that technology now allows.

It has not been unlike cleaning out your parents’ house. Each box holds achievements, stories, and reminders of how much has happened in 35 years—how much is profoundly different in today’s world—and yet how much remains the same.

I found copies of KRC’s first Food Systems Study from 1982. Yes, we were talking about a food “system” and how Kansas had once grown much of its fruits and vegetables and could do so again, way back in 1982.

I came across research on interbasin transfers and copies of that long ago Corps study of a pipeline to transfer water from the Missouri River to Western Kansas. What crazy ideas we had then, huh?

I found old Small Farm Energy Primers from the Center for Rural Affairs, our sister organization who helped us get started in 1979. The primers were full of on-farm energy innovations like solar grain dryers and solar water heaters for dairy barns. More crazy ideas, right?

And then there were the records of our early sustainable farming practices project—pre-Clean Water Farms. These were on-farm demonstrations to help farmers reduce their reliance on expensive inputs like fertilizers through interseeding legumes and planting cover crops that could also be used as forages, increase water infiltration, and build soil. Sound familiar?

The farm crisis of the mid-80’s, one of the most dramatic periods of recent farm history, was also tucked away in the attic in the form of in-take files and folders on farmer advocate trainings. We fielded countless phone calls from farmers facing foreclosure or bankruptcy threats. We quickly turned to organizing meetings that trained a statewide farmer advocate network that helped many of those callers save their farms.

Throughout it all, we asked essential questions about corporate control and concentration of land and water ownership.

It is not perhaps so much that things remain the same after three decades, but that KRC has always been focused on the critical issues—asking the right questions—and change does not come easily or quickly on the big issues.

Technology now allows us to economize on space, collaborate at great distances, and communicate more often and more effectively. Our goals and passion remain the same. Our address is all that has changed.

Please be patient with our new phone system and our new Topeka address. We are sure there will be bumps in the road, but in the long run, we think we can be leaner, more efficient, and more effective.

Mary Fund can be reached at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org

Celebrating 35 Years of Support for Sustainable Agriculture --Rural Papers

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A donation of $60/year provides KRC “Friend” benefits: KRC e-mail alerts, one-year of Rural Papers Newsletter, and Policy Watch E-Updates. ($25 for Seniors or Students.)

Donors of $100 or more annually are recognized as KRC “sustainers” and will receive occasional special offers on publications or events.

Subscriptions to Rural Papers ($35) and Policy Watch ($25) are still available separately.
**Calendar**

October 25-26 Mother Earth News Fair, Kansas Expo Centre, Topeka, Ks. 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Contact: www.MotherEarthNewsFair.com

October 31-November 1 Amazing Grazing Project Fall Forage Tour
1 p.m. Start on both days, Dale Strickler Farm. Go to: www.AmazingGrazingKansas.com or call Mary Howell at 785-562-8726

November 7-8 KRC 35th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Food and Farm Conference, Manhattan, Ks. Go to: www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/conference-2014/

November 14-15 Women Food and Ag Network (WFAN) Annual Conference, “Women Doing Democracy: Building Grassroots Coalition to Build Healthy Food and Farming in Your Community”, Fairfield Arts and Convention Center, Fairfield, IA  Go to: www.wfan.org

December 6, Farming Transitions and Apprenticeships and Getting Started With Multiple Species Enterprises with Cody Holmes, Rockin H Ranch and Real Farm Foods, Four Points Sheraton, Manhattan, Ks. KFU and Ks. Beginning Farmer Coalition. Contact Mary Howell at 785-562-8726 of kfu.mary@gmail.com

Please check the KRC website for updated and more detailed calendar and announcement information on the above and for additional events at:

www.kansasruralcenter.org

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