

# Incentives program helps to develop wildlife habitat

The cutoff date for farmers and ranchers to submit applications for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is Feb. 8.

"We want producers to have their applications ready," said Astor F. Boozer, Acting State Conservationist for Kansas, "when the requested funding for WHIP is received from the national Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office."

The WHIP is a voluntary program through NRCS for landowners who want to develop or improve wildlife habitat on private lands. Anyone interested in learning more about improving wildlife habitat and would like to submit an application for program assistance can do so at any time.

"Initial ideas that come to mind when people think about creating habitat for wildlife are to plant grass, trees, or shrubs," said Troy J. Munsch, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Salina. "While these practices can obviously provide benefits for wildlife where habitat is non-existent, it is often easier to manipulate existing habitat to achieve desired wildlife habitat objectives. What many people do not know is how WHIP can be used to improve existing habitat for wildlife, even

on lands that are in agricultural production."

Munsch provided the following examples for using WHIP to enhance existing habitat.

There are several declining species of wildlife that are closely associated with grasslands. Prairie chickens and bobwhite quail are two familiar examples. Conservation practices offered through WHIP can greatly improve habitat for these species. Invasive trees have become a problem throughout the state on native grasslands. Trees adversely influence prairie chicken abundance on grasslands. WHIP offers two conservation practices to control unwanted invasive trees: brush management and prescribed burning. By removing invasive trees, applying a prescribed burn once every three or four years, and practicing proper grazing management, habitat for prairie chickens, bobwhite quail, and many species of non-game birds can be improved dramatically.

Vegetation that normally grows within 300 feet of a stream, called a riparian area, provides habitat for turkeys, deer, and bobwhite quail. Stream-side vegetation also provides shade and habitat for aquatic species living within

the stream itself. Over 60 percent of the species classified as threatened and endangered in Kansas rely on streams and riparian habitat to survive. Riparian areas that are being degraded by uncontrolled livestock access can be improved by installing fencing through WHIP. WHIP can also help develop alternative water sources for livestock to keep them from damaging vegetation and reducing water quality in streams. Areas prone to erosion within riparian areas or on cropland next to streams can be seeded back to native grasses and wildflowers to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

Conservation practices that enhance existing habitat are often more cost effective and meet habitat objectives relatively quicker than establishing new habitat. Landowners should contact their local NRCS field office located at the USDA Service Center to submit an application. Applicants can expect funding decisions to be completed in the early spring of 2008.

For more information about NRCS programs, visit the Kansas NRCS Web site at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

# Money available for ground, surface water conservation

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has made Friday, Feb. 8 as the cutoff date for producers in a Quick Response Area (QRA) to submit Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) applications.

Astor F. Boozer, Acting State Conservationist for Kansas, said the national NRCS office has provided funding for EQIP GSWC. The EQIP signup last fall provided no funding for GSWC. In Kansas, this funding is only available for water quantity resource concerns in the identified QRAs.

## EQIP GSWC Provision — Quick Response Areas (QRAs)

Producers in QRAs, who have a water quantity resource concern, may apply for financial assistance through the GSWC provisions of EQIP, said Troy J. Munsch, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Salina.

"QRAs, or Quick Response Areas, were introduced for EQIP funding two years ago

and are available again this year to improve the effectiveness of EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation funds," said Munsch. "The QRAs have changed a little from those last year. These areas were identified by the four western Kansas Groundwater Management Districts and the Kansas Division of Water Resources."

The NRCS will provide EQIP financial assistance for approved applications located within the QRAs where producers convert irrigated cropland to non-irrigated cropland or grassland, he said. When producers apply for 2008 EQIP GSWC funding, they will be required to fill out a Kansas EQIP Self-Assessment Worksheet - Irrigation - Quick Response Areas prior to the application evaluation period cutoff date.

## Limited Resource and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

"EQIP is available to help address the unique circumstances and concerns of limited resource and beginning farmers, who have irrigated land with a water

quantity natural resource concern that needs to be addressed," said Munsch.

"In Kansas limited resource and beginning farmers and ranchers may receive a higher conservation practice payment through EQIP."

## Apply at Local NRCS Office

Information about 2008 EQIP is available on the website at [www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2008](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2008) or is available at your local USDA Service Center from the NRCS or conservation district staff. This will include information about 2008 EQIP; EQIP fact sheets explaining Kansas EQIP, GSWC, and QRA; map of QRA; the Kansas EQIP Self-Assessment Worksheets; an application form; a list of eligible practices and average costs; and specifics on Kansas's ranking process, including criteria used to evaluate applications.

The Norton County Conservation Office can be reached at (785) 877-5156.

## Time to Think About Valentine's Day

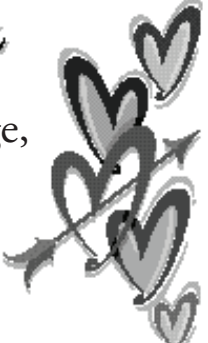
Before we know it flowers will be delivered, chocolate candies will be purchased and love will fill the air.

This Valentine's Day how will you woo your sweetheart? What would be the perfect way to say, "I Love You"?


Why not let Cupid inspire all you love birds

*\$10.00 for Valentine's Day Message and Graphic or \$15.00 for Valentine's Day Message and a Personal Photo*


*From The Heart*  
Grandma Julie and Grandpa George,  
**WE LOVE YOU!**  
Love, Billy, Susan, Mary, Zach,  
Charlie, Emily and Sarah



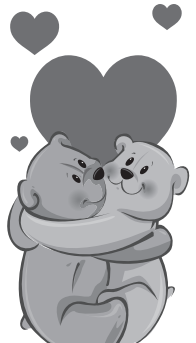
Chris,  
*Everytime I look at you, my heart skips a beat!*  
I Love You! - Love Annie



Melissa,  
*Your love gives me the feeling that the best is still ahead. I love you so much honey!*  
Love Your Husband, Craig



Jennifer,  
*Happy Valentine's Day! You are such a great friend and I'm so happy that we can count on each other.*  
Friends forever!  
Love, Megan



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