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Good news for rural America

ood news for rural America is a new U.S. Department of Agriculture program to help states lease land and improve habitat for public access. Called the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, the effort is authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill.

It offers states and tribal governments up to \$50 million in grants through 2012 to expand or create public access programs.

"We believe that encouraging outdoor recreation activities in rural communities represents a real opportunity," said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

The number of hunters and fishermen has been declining for years as America becomes more urban and less rural. Once, hunters could knock on the door and expect to be welcomed by a farm owner.

Today, with many farmers living in town or miles from their fields, it's increasingly difficult to get permission to hunt or fish. Private leases take more land out of the pool.

But \$50 million isn't much money in this day and age, so why is this important? First, with much land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program, farmers maybe can use the money. The federal money might preserve some habitat that might otherwise be lost to the plow.

Second, rural America needs all the friends it can get. Face it: there aren't many of us compared to our brethren in the city. We don't vote in numbers anymore. So anything we get from Washington will be the result of partnerships with city folk.

We need them on our side.

We need them to understand our positions, our needs. We need them to care. And hunters who visit the farm and get to know farmers are just the type of supporters we need.

What we loosely call the Farm Bill today really is a welfare bill. Most of the money goes to urban programs. We've seen what happens when city-bred environmental interests get their hands on this money: Conservation Reserve cut, ethanol programs under attack, cheap food always in the forefront.

Rural Americans, as few as we are, cannot go to Washington and force anyone to do anything. Not enough of us. Farmers are fewer still. So we need all the friends we can find.

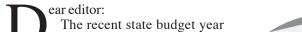
Third, hunting, fishing and recreation are big business. Secretary Vilsack estimates that and people using public lands under his department spend \$12 billion a year in nearby towns, creating a quarter-million jobs. The department sees a chance to spread that around, and those of us surrounded by private land could use some of that business.

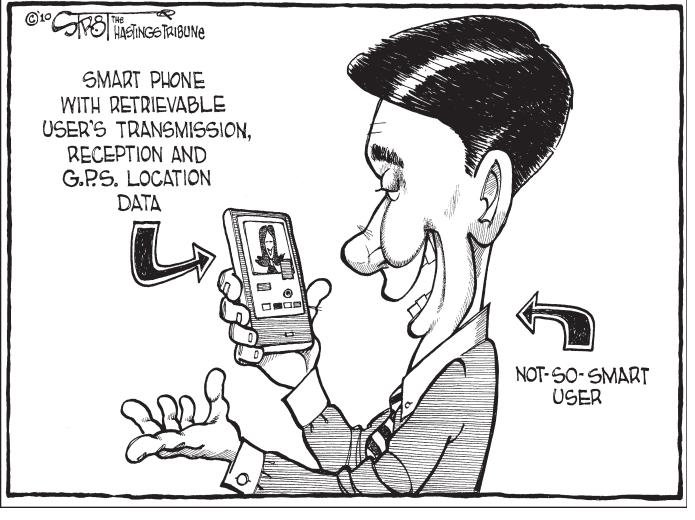
Kansas officials, knowing how little public land we have in this state, welcomed the new program. Kansas already has 1 million acres under lease and might be able to do more with some federal money.

We wouldn't say \$1 million per state was enough to change the world, but it's a start. To really help us, this program needs to grow and expand. But anything Washington does to help us is welcome.

– Steve Haynes

Future full of challenges





Voter fraud, illegal aliens major issues

ear Editor:

Voter fraud and illegal aliens have become major issues nation-wide. Fortunately, Kansas Secretary of State candidate Kris Kobach does more than talk about these concerns. Kris, a law professor, assisted Arizona

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in constructing a new law which is likely to survive a constitutional challenge and protect all Americans.

Richard J. Peckham Chairman, Kansas Judicial Review Andover, Kan.

Enduring the ultimate test

Our marriage endured the ultimate litmus test and survived: we worked together all last week and are still speaking.

Jim got a job replacing the front of an office building and needed a "ground man." Since I'm mostly unemployed, except for the occasional feature article or two, it seemed logical for me to be

his sidekick for the job. Now, I've never

shied away from hard work but, Jim

has this ridiculous idea that we need to

be on the work-site before 7:30. That's

a.m. Do you know how early I have to

get up in order to be ready "to roll" (his

words, not mine) by that time? I don't

care if I am just "schlepping" hammers

and nails, I still have to do my hair and

Jim's been very patient with me. Intel-

lectually, I know that being married to a

carpenter no more makes ME a carpenter

than standing in a garage makes me a

mechanic. However, I have learned a

few things over the years by watching

him work. One is "measure twice - cut

Perhaps I didn't learn it too well. That's

powder my nose.

once."

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



friends has shrunk. You know, the whole Friendship Bread Starter thingie. I still have one bag of starter left from this last batch and I'm desperately looking for a home for it. Seems like I'm not the first person to be sucked in the "chain letter" of starters.

I managed to coerce a friend who wanted one bag to take two. She has

ended on June 30. Organizations such as DSNWK, which serves some of our most vulnerable citizens, shouldered much of the budget cuts that hit our state, totaling more than \$1 billion dollars.

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Our organization alone was cut \$1,400,000.

In just the past three years, we have had to lay of 70 staff and eliminate vital services.

Meanwhile many people who still need services languish on long waiting lists (totaling more than 4,000 across the state, 147 in Northwest Kansas alone).

We worked very hard during that time to inform our neighbors in the region about the damage to services to persons with disabilities, which nearly everyone agrees is a necessary and vital service in Kansas.

Some legislators worked hard in this past session to propose more cuts: to schools, to disability services, to public safety and other programs which strengthen our communities.

Thankfully, most legislators cast their votes to protect persons served by DSNWK from further harm.

These votes took courage and leadership, and were votes to do the right

THE NORTON



d thing.

Thanks are owed to Governor Parkinson; Senators Lee and Ostmeyer and, Representatives Johnson, Hineman and Phelps.

Their efforts helped restore previously eliminated resources and will help allow services to continue for our neighbors with disabilities.

Their efforts this session helped avert disaster for our communities, for which we are grateful.

The future also looks full of challenges for our state, and we pray that our public servants in Topeka show this same kind of leadership for our future.

A grateful community partner and advocate,

Jerry Michaud, President – DSNWK Agency filed by the Friends of the Kaw could cost the agriculture industry in Kansas millions of dollars by pushing more nutrient control measures for wastewater treatment systems on the agricultural landscape. Friends of Kaw is a non-profit, environmental organization whose mission is to protect/preserve the Kansas River.

Not only would this expansion of authority be detrimental to Kansas agriculture, small businesses, cities and others who have made significant improvements to control runoff and to protect streams and water supplies, but there is little evidence the requested standards would result in additional improvements to water quality.

For several decades, Kansas has operated under a narrative standard for nutrient management. This meant Kansas operated under a verbal statement of its intention to maintain best management practices to ensure water quality from agriculture (and other) storm water runoff to limit nutrients entering surface waters.

However, in 1998 EPA directed states to adopt stricter numeric standards for nutrients, requiring a single, set number. Compliance with this type of standard is much more difficult given the variwhy after I cut the wrong

end off a piece of wood - twice - he came close to losing it. But, when I reminded him that "you get what you pay for" he backed off. I may not be good help but, I am cheap.

– ob –

Good news from Texas. Our granddaughter, Taylor, arrived home safe and sound from her two weeks in Canada. Her mother said she had tried to deny that she was tired after her flight. But, with only a little encouragement, Taylor took a four-hour nap.

After she's had some time to rest and catch up with her friends I'll grill her about her trip.

-ob-It's becoming obvious my list of three daughters who bake. Surely, they can keep it going for years.

When I asked one friend if she wanted a bag of starter, she didn't even wait for me to finish the question.

"No, no, no," was her immediate reply. Adding, "I don't want to be tied to any schedule like that."

– ob –

I was alerted to the impending surgery of one of my high school classmates. That led me to call other classmates to let them know.

Each one added a piece of information about the failing health of other classmates until I surmised that we are falling apart. As my friend, John, put it, "Growing old isn't for sissies."

Unnecessary and costly

Insight John Schlageck

able nature of Kansas waters and runoff events.

Throughout the years, farmer and rancher members who belong to Kansas Farm Bureau have worked closely with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) in the development and implementation of our current narrative standard.

Through their farm organization, these members have responded back with their intention to intervene should this Friends of Kaw suit move forward.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," said Ottawa County farmer Steve Baccus, who serves as president of KFB. "By all accounts, the state's current nutrient reduction system is working."

Farmers and ranchers understand the critical need to maintain water quality and are using farming practices to limit the application of nutrients.

They have installed millions of dollars worth of runoff control measures to ensure Kansas streams remain a valuable and available resource for everyone.

Farming and ranching operations across Kansas are diverse. Each and

every business is different.

Some producers operate small-scale livestock backgrounding operations and at the same time grow row crops. Others grow specialty crops. And still others operate commercial cattle feeding facilities or large-scale row crop businesses.

The diversity of agricultural operations and the type of aquatic ecosystems in Kansas makes the "one-size-fits-all" approach of a numeric standard costly, illogical and difficult to administer.

In addition, each of those operators – when required – have worked to monitor and develop control measures as well as implement best management practices to ensure nutrients are applied within acceptable limits, or are contained to prevent runoff which could impact water quality.

During the short amount of time this strategy has been in place, improvements to water quality have been seen and will continue to be measured. Imposition of numeric criteria will not enhance this strategy, and in fact may retard its progress.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

<u>STAFF</u>

<u> </u>
Dana Paxton general manager
advertising director/
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Dick BoydBlue Jay sports
Erica Bradley managing editor
Harriett Gillsociety editor
Sherry Hickman bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Hendersoncomputer production

