

# Kansas native grasslands appreciated by ranchers

By Paul Gallagher  
Agricultural Economist  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Kansas has the finest, most productive native grassland in the world.

Kansas may also have the most conservation-conscious ranchers in the world, too. In the last few years, those ranchers have signed 47 U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation easements that will protect 23,000 acres of the state's native grassland. The easements are under the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), a 2002 Farm Bill program.

The program and Kansas have been a perfect fit. Administered jointly by ag department, the conservational service and Farm Service Agency, this is a voluntary program that offers landowners an opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grassland on their property. Its primary purposes include preservation of native and naturalized grassland, support

for grazing operations, protection from threat of conversion, and maintaining or improving plant and animal biodiversity. Landowners are required to follow a conservation plan, which allows for common grazing practices. Those plans are also designed to stop the spread of unwelcome invasive species such as sericea lespedeza and cedar trees.

Maintaining healthy, productive native grassland is vital to Kansas. The state's \$6 billion per year cattle industry depends, in part, on high quality forage. Scores of small, rural towns rely on profitable ranches for commerce. Native grasses also serve as critical habitat to the Greater Prairie Chicken, a species with a declining population. Moreover, Kansas ranchers are the sole stewards of the last vestige of America's rapidly declining tallgrass prairie.

The tallgrass prairie, and its rich diversity of plant and animal species, once cut a wide, 150-million acre swath across

North America's midsection. Today, however, more than 90 percent has been converted to non-rangeland uses. Two-thirds of what remains of the prairie is in Kansas. And what remains of the Kansas tallgrass prairie is in jeopardy. Commuters from nearby urban areas (Wichita, Topeka, Manhattan, and Emporia), attracted to low land prices and scenic vistas, are eagerly staking 10- to 40-acre home plots. Industrial wind farm developers are also eyeing the rolling, wind swept prairie. Additionally, invasive species have been rapidly establishing their own niche where native grasses once thrived.

The program's conservation easements are one way to prevent the destruction of the Kansas prairie. And because Kansas ranchers have demonstrated a keen interest in the program, the prairie will forever remain a vital part of the state's economical and ecological heritage.

You may visit your local conservation office to learn more about natural resources conservation. The office is located at your local department's Service Center (listed in the telephone book under United States Government or on the Internet at [offices.usda.gov](http://offices.usda.gov)). More information is also available on the Kansas Web site at [www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov).

## Consultant achieves prestigious award

William E. Small, Financial Consultant with AXA Advisors, serving the St. Francis area has fully qualified for the 2008 Million Dollar Round Table. This is the 22nd consecutive year he has achieved membership in this organization. Membership is recognized internationally as the standard of excellence in the life insurance and financial

services business. It also reflects a commitment to continuing advanced education to better serve the financial security needs of families, individuals and businesses.

Mr. Small is a member of the Ark Valley Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors, and the Society of Financial Service Professionals.

## Cancer testing urged

You have the power to prevent colon cancer.

Are you 50 or older? The American Cancer Society recommends that you get tested

Regardless of race or gender, everyone needs to be screened for colon cancer. This year an estimated 50,000 people will die from the disease.

Colon cancer almost always

starts with a polyp, a small growth on the lining of the colon or rectum. Finding and removing polyps before they become cancerous can stop it before it starts.

There are several tests to check for colon cancer. Talk with your doctor or nurse about these tests, how often they are done, and which is test is best for you!



FREDDY PACHECO earns third place in the 16-years and younger, 115 pound class at the District IV Tournament held in Hays.

## Thirteen wrestlers qualify

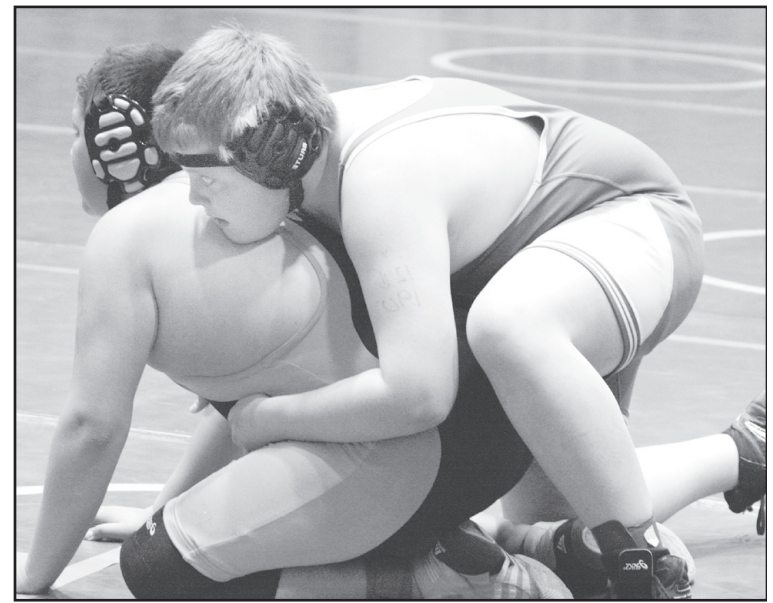
Thirteen St. Francis youth have qualified for the right to travel to the Kansas Kids State Wrestling Tournament in Topeka this weekend.

Going from the St. Francis Kids Wrestling Club are Garrett Brunk, Shakotah Blanka, Taylor O'Leary, Lucas Carmichael, Casey Keller, Trevor Reed, Adam Guthmiller, Nathan Lamb, Freddy Pacheco, Terrence Lamb, Darris Keller, Scott Ford and Grady Brunk. All of these wrestlers place in the top four positions in their weight class at the District IV Tournament in Hays on Saturday except Carmichael. He placed fifth but will be going as the wrestler who placed fourth did not want to advance to State. This gave Carmichael the opportunity to be eligible to be the fourth place seed.

"The St. Francis wrestling club had a very good weekend by qualifying 13," said Shawna Blanka, one of the coordinators. "They had an outstanding day."

Luke Lampe, in the eight-and-under bracket, and Lane Hoffman, in the 12-and-under division, qualified for the District meet but did not qualify for State.

Results include:



LUCAS CARMICHAEL controls his opponent.

Photos courtesy of Kristi Guthmiller

8 and under: Luke Lampe, 61 pounds, placed sixth.

10 and under: Garrett Brunk, 85 pounds, placed fourth; Shakotah Blanka, 170 pounds, placed first.

12 and under: Lane Hoffman, 76 pounds, went 0-2; Taylor O'Leary, 92 pounds, placed fourth; Lucas Carmichael, 190 pounds, placed fifth.

14 and under: Casey Keller, 75 pounds, placed first; Trevor

Reed, 155 pounds, placed third; Adam Guthmiller, 175 pounds, placed first; Nathan Lamb, 265 pounds, placed first.

16 and under: Freddy Pacheco, 115 pounds, placed third; Terrence Lamb, 125 pounds, placed fourth; Darris Keller, 130 pounds, placed third; Scott Ford, 165 pounds, placed second; Grady Brunk, 165 pounds, placed fourth.

## Upcoming Promotions

For more information contact Casey McCormick at:

**The Saint Francis Herald**  
P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, KS 67756 • 785-332-3162

## Spring School Section

Featuring students involved in sports, vocal, band, drama, honor society and journalism



## Rural Health Section

This section is packed full of information on hospitals, physicians and medical services available in the area



## OOPS — Sorry This Missed Ag Week

"Saluting Our Area Farmers and Ranchers."

From the basics of feed and fertilizer to targeted marketing services, we can help you grow a more successful farm.

- ➡ Bulk Fuel ➡ Grain
- ➡ Fertilizer ➡ Chemicals
- ➡ Custom Applications
- ➡ Livestock Feed
- ➡ Pet Food
- ➡ Farm Supply ➡ Seed
- ➡ Service Station
- ➡ Pay at the Pump
- ➡ Tires

ELEVATING YOUR FARM TO THE NEXT LEVEL



St. Francis Equity  
123 N. River Street  
St. Francis, Ks. • 785.332.2113  
Haigler, NE • 308-297-3223

"Locally Owned By The Farmers of This Community Since 1913"