

There is money in those "mudholes"

By Joan L. Gienger, District Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Rain returned to the High Plains this year as did snow this winter. The landscape is once again dotted with glistening water holes. What at first may be perceived as a "problem" to the farmer can actually be a "blessing in disguise".

These temporary water holes, or "playas", can provide numerous benefits to our society. When functioning properly, they play an important role in providing wildlife habitat and aquifer recharge, as well as a host of other benefits.

The open surface water is most often present in the spring and autumn of the year, prime migration season for water fowl. The open water, invertebrates, and seasonal vegetation provide the necessary cover and food to support a variety of birds, as well as other species of wildlife. Playas support over 350 animal species and 340 plant species.

Not a bird lover? There is also the aquifer recharge to consider. Scientists have gathered substantial evidence pointing to playa wetlands as the primary, and some say the exclusive, source of recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer. This aquifer is a 174,000 square-mile formation underlying sections of eight states, including Kansas. It is our major source of water for municipalities, industries, and most notably agricultural development. If you live in Cheyenne County, more than likely your drinking water comes from this formation. Many studies indicate that recharge under playas occurs at a rate 100 to 1000 times greater than for inter-playa uplands.

Of course, these benefits come from "functioning" playas. Playas under farmed conditions have often lost these benefits because of sediment filling the recharge portals—the pores, cracks and tunnels that form in the clay layer underlying a playa.

Restoring these "functions" is relatively simple. Usually it involves removing some of the sediment and planting a grass buffer around the perimeter of the playa. Because of the many benefits to society of functioning playas, fed-

eral and state programs are available to compensate farmers for the loss of cropland.

The most popular of these is the Conservation Reserve Program. Wetland restoration practices are available on a continuous sign-up basis. Depending on the size of the playa, compensation for out-of-pocket expenses may be as high as 90 percent of the cost. In addition, a rental payment comparable to cash lease prices is paid for 10 to 15 years for both the playa and the surrounding buffer. For small playas there is a one-time sign-up payment of \$100 per acre.

For a longer commitment, the Wetland Reserve Program is available. The most popular options under this program are the 30-year easement and the permanent easement. Under the permanent option, the landowner is offered a payment that compensates for the fair market value of the land. In addition, the entire cost of restoring the wetland is covered by the program. 30-year easements compensate at a reduced rate.

Both of these programs are available from the United States Department of Agriculture on an equal opportunity basis. One is administered by the Farm Services Agency, the other by the Natural Resources Conservation Service; however, both agencies work together to provide assistance to interested land owners or operators. State agencies are also available to work with interested parties and can sometimes fill a gap left by the federal program.

More information is available at the website <http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov>. Click on "Programs" in the header and then select the program of choice. Personnel at the local United States Department of Agriculture Service Center are also available to answer questions and assist with application.



COOKIE DELIVERY – Zoe Sundstrum and Sydney Sundstrum are presenting Alice Lampe with the Girl Scout cookies which she had ordered from them earlier.
Herald staff photo by Karen Krien

Moments With Mila

By Mila Bandel
County Health Nurse



February is National Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack.

In 2009, an estimated 785,000 Americans had a new coronary attack, and about 470,000 will have a recurrent attack. About every 25 seconds, an American will have a coronary event, and about one every minute will die from one.

The chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by taking steps to prevent and control factors that put people at greater risk. Additionally, knowing the signs and symptoms of heart attack are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack. People who have survived a heart attack can also work to reduce their risk of another heart attack or a stroke in the future.

Other conditions that affect your heart or increase your risk of death or disability include arrhythmia,

breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

A new report by The Institute of Medicine finds even brief exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger a heart attack. Tobacco smoke can cause health problems not only for smokers, but also for people around them. Breathing secondhand smoke increases a person's risk for a heart attack and other heart conditions.

A healthy diet and lifestyle are the best weapons you have to fight heart disease. Many people make it harder than it is. It is important to remember that it is the overall pattern of the choices you make that counts. As you make daily food choices, base your eating pattern on these recommendations:

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs. These may include

oils to reduce trans fat in your diet.

- Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day.
- Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. All persons who have hypertension, all middle-aged and older adults, and all blacks should consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. That means no more than one drink per day if you're a woman and two drinks per day if you're a man.
- Keep an eye on your portion sizes. Don't take your heart for granted, take care of your heart it is a precious organ!

Putting our Energy into Education

Black Hills Energy is offering 15 scholarships each to high school students graduating in 2010 in our Kansas and Colorado natural gas service areas. The scholarships are for \$1,000 each. Application forms will be available through participating high schools in February. **Applications must be completed and returned by March 19 to Black Hills Energy External Affairs at the address below. Incomplete applications cannot be considered.**

Students interested in applying for a scholarship should contact their school counselor. The application also is available online. Go to www.blackhillsenergy.com/scholarships and enter your ZIP Code. Then choose "Scholarships" from the list.

Questions? Contact:
Black Hills Energy
External Affairs Department
110 E. 9th St.
Lawrence, KS 66044

Or, call **785-832-3918**.

Students are eligible to apply if they meet the following criteria:

- A parent or guardian is a natural gas customer of Black Hills Energy.
- The student ranks in the top 25 percent of his or her graduating class or scores 21 or higher on the ACT or 980 or higher on the SAT.
- The student plans to attend an accredited college or university as a full-time student to obtain a bachelor's degree.

Relatives of current or retired Black Hills Energy employees are not eligible to participate in this program. A relative is defined as a child, grandchild, brother, sister, stepchild, foster child, spouse or in-law.



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