

# Bird City post office faces closure or reduced hours

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Bird City residents are in danger of losing their post office or having reduced services much like McDonald's post office last year.

This Thursday, July 31, at 4:30 p.m., local management from the regional post office will be holding a meeting with Bird City residents in the Legion Hall to determine the future of the Bird City post office. Questionnaires that were sent out will be reviewed as residents voice their opinions and concerns.

McDonald residents faced a similar problem last January when they were given the option of four choices on a questionnaire that was sent out. Residents rallied together, and because of the participation in the meeting that was held, their post office was kept open. Changes were made, however, and the McDonald post office is now open shorter hours.

Currently, the Bird City mail is sorted and picked up at the St. Francis post office. Residents of Bird City still have a post office in town, and residents can currently receive all their mail there. The

lobby is open 24 hours a day, every day. Window hours run from 9 a.m. to 12:30. They then close for lunch for half an hour and return from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Bird City residents requesting mail to be held have to call or go to the St. Francis post office to have their mail held at the St. Francis post office rather than Bird City. Mail at Bird City, St. Francis and McDonald is being sent to North Platte, Neb., for processing.

Having a post office in town is vital to the community. The United States Postal Service has been closing the smaller, rural post offices over the last few years that have not been profitable. Unfortunately, it tends to be these rural post offices that are most needed by the town's residents.

The United States Postal Service reported that it ended the 2013 fiscal year with a net loss of \$5 billion. This marks the seventh consecutive year in which the postal service incurred a net loss, highlighting the need to continue

to capitalize on growth opportunities and reduce costs.

A self-sustaining government enterprise, the United States Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation.

This Thursday, residents of Bird City are urged to attend the meeting. The number of concerned citizens may help keep the post office open and leave things as they currently are.

The questionnaires must be returned to the Bird City post office by July 31. The questionnaire gave Bird City residents four options, including closing the post office, keeping it open reduced hours based on workload, or having a local business contract with the post office and offer services.

Whatever your preference, it is important to attend the meeting and voice it. Without Bird City residents present, the local management for the regional post office may make a decision without the community's input.



These productive soils in Cheyenne County, Kansas are hidden beneath a protective cover crop. While growing, cover crops feed and improve the soil. While decomposing, they maintain soil temperatures, shield against erosion and control weeds.

## Conserve America

Farmers Harness Benefits from Cover Crops

A growing number of farmers in Kansas have "discovered the cover" and for some very good reasons. By "cover," I'm talking about cover crops, which are plants established when cash crops are not being grown.

Cover crops are planted because of their excellent benefits, including improving the health and function of soil. This leads to better nutrient cycling, improved water infiltration and more consistent yields over time. Cover crops also suppress weeds, prevent erosion, control diseases and pests as well as help pollinators.

Farmers not familiar with how mixtures of cover crops work together might ask, "Why would I want to plant a cover crop that uses up all my water?" But using diverse annual cropping rotations and cover crop combinations increases soil organic matter. And for each 1 percent in organic matter, there is a 25 percent increase in water holding capacity and up to 30 pounds an acre more of available nitrogen.

While cover crops use some water in the soil profile to grow, they simultaneously improve the soil structure by building soil aggregates, providing armor for the soil surface, and recharging the water in the soil profile through increased infiltration.

About 600 farmers surveyed

in 2012 on the impact of drought reported an average increase of 14 bushels of corn per acre and five bushels more of soybeans per acre where they had a cover crop as compared with fields without cover crops.

Common cover crops in Kansas include peas, oats, vetch, tillage radish, sorghum sudan grass, buckwheat & alfalfa. Planting cover crops is one of several key steps that farmers can take to improve soil health. The other two are rotating crops, including cover crops that are planted, and not tilling.

When a variety of cover crops are planted, especially when 10-12 plant species are planted, they increase the soil biology and speed soil health improvements. The more diversity you have, the more plant balance you have above ground, the better soil biology balance you have below ground. Plus, cover crops can help reduce compaction without deep tillage.

When only one cover crop species is planted, the single crop - or monoculture - will struggle in a drought or when facing pests. Many farmers are working with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to choose the right mix of cover crop seeds - or "cocktail" - for their farm.

The Cheyenne County Local

Work Group recently requested that Kansas NRCS consider paying producers for implementing cover crops for three consecutive years, since it requires this amount of time for a farmer to start seeing significant gains in soil organic matter. This request was granted in the 2014 Environmental Quality Incentives Program for Kansas.

If you farm or are interested in farming, visit the NRCS field office for help on choosing the right conservation efforts for your land. We can also put you in touch with local producers that have grown cover crops for a few seasons on their fields. They are a great resource for understanding local conditions and which species of cover does best in Cheyenne County.

You can also check out these two sites for more information on cover crops: website "http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/por-

By  
Bernadette  
Luncsford  
District Conservationist



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## Colorado begins sale of hunting licenses

Hunters seeking tags for either bucks or bulls, or simply a cow elk for the freezer, can look forward to an ample number of leftover big-game licenses for the 2014 seasons.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has approximately 6,000 deer, 30,000 elk, 5,000 pronghorn and 1,800 bear licenses available for the fall hunting seasons. Leftover licenses are surplus licenses that went unsold during the limited drawing.

For the first time ever, both <http://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/BigGame.aspx> leftover and over-the-counter (OTC) licenses go on sale the same day. In addition, hunters may purchase licenses online without having to wait an additional day as in years past.

All leftover and OTC licenses go on sale Aug. 5 at 9 a.m. Mountain Standard Time. Licenses may be purchased at statewide license agents, Colorado Parks and Wildlife service

centers, online or by calling 1-800-244-5613. In addition to a current and valid photo ID, proof of residency and social security number, anyone buying a license must have a Hunter Education card, unless the hunter was born before Jan. 1, 1949. Bring this card with you for in-person sales.

A list of available leftover licenses may be accessed at <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/BigGame/Leftovers>. <http://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/hunt.aspx>

The leftover list updates every 15 minutes once the sales process begins Aug. 5.

Don't miss your chance to hunt Colorado this fall! For more information about big-game hunting in Colorado and license availability, click <http://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/BigGame.aspx>.

For more information about Colorado Parks and Wildlife go to: <http://cpw.state.co.us>.

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