

Megan Leonard looked for a Cowgirl teammate to pass to during the game against the Norton Lady Jay Birds. The Cowgirls lost the game 60-56 in the closing minutes. Photo by Greg Stover / The Goodland Star-News

Leonard's win Bankers Award



The trees on David and Lori Leonard's farm help block the wind around their house. The trees have been on the farm since 1978, when David's family picked up a truckload of trees in eastern Kansas.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

LEONARD, from Page 3

minimum till, no till or strip till to conserve moisture and soil. David said they have been doing strip till for the past six years. It leaves eight to ten-inch strips, he said, where the next

crop will be planted.

Strip tillage leaves crop residue standing, Wedel said, which slows the wind speed at the ground level, protecting the new plants. It helps capture moisture that falls naturally, he said, and protects the soil from wind and

water erosion.

Leaving the residue standing also provides a wildlife habitat, Wedel said, for example, nesting places for pheasants.

See LEONARD, Page 10

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Leonard's win award

LEONARD, from Page 9

Strip tillage is a fairly recent adaptation of tillage practices, Wedel said, from the last six or seven years. The Leonards are among the first in this area to move in that direction, he said.

And the practice has served them well in Wedel's opinion.

"A couple of years ago," he said, "I was on one of David's fields. There was good moisture condition — he captured the moisture well and didn't farm it away."

The producers who are best at doing the reduced tillage methods are faring better in the drought, Wedel said; they have more residue out there. Having high-residue crops in the rotation also helps, he said; it's like a blanket for the soil. The Leonards do well at that, Wedel said.

Another practice Wedel said the Leonards do well is breaking large fields into smaller fields to protect them from erosion. With wheat on

one smaller strip, fallow on another and corn on still another, he said, it reduces the distance of land exposed to wind erosion.

He also credits the Leonards with using quality seed and being consistent in all their methods.

They use certified wheat seed, the best seeds, Wedel said, and the best fertility methods, harvesting methods and planting methods. Their whole operation is consistent, he said.

"Their income comes from the land," Wedel said, "and they treat it as such."

He also credits the Leonards for involving their children in their practices through 4-H.

The Leonards' children are daughter Megan, a senior at Goodland High School, and Micheal, 21, an agronomy major at Fort Hays State University. Megan is involved in many activities, Lori said, including basketball and National Honor Society.

The Leonards may benefit in the future from cultivating an interest in farming in their children. Lori said Micheal may come home from college and teach his parents a few things.



Micheal



David and Lori Leonard use strip tilling, as shown in this field, to capture as much natural moisture as possible for their fields.
Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

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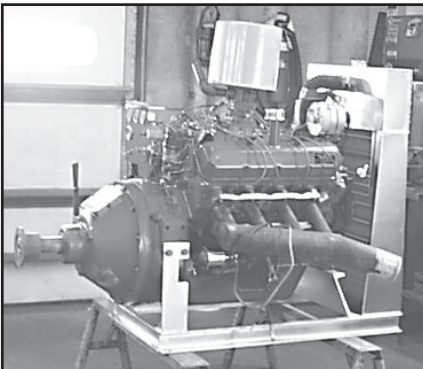
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Pine trees best protection for cattle

ISAAC, from Page 5

planted east of the house in three rows.

In 1983 he planted another 600 trees with 100 Ponderosa, 100 Blue Spruce and 400 Austrian pine.

That gave him a total length of 3,480 feet of windbreak. The trees run 1,400 feet from east of the house to the west and then south about 900 feet and then 1,080 feet west.

There are three rows of trees east of the house and six rows to the west then six to the south and a total of 10 rows to the west.

"I wanted to use pine trees for my windbreak and picked on varieties that would grow the fastest," he said. "I had a couple of wooden windbreaks that did not work very well until the trees got big enough.

"There is nothing like a good pine tree windbreak to protect cattle and calves, and once I had them in place I never had any problem with scours in the calves.

"Cattle made me money. What the farm land produced we used to make the payments."

The windbreak won them a state windbreak award in 1986, and State

Forester John Strine nominated them for the award.

"We had the forester come out and check the trees to make sure they were healthy and we have not had a problem with diseases," Vernon said.

Karen began driving a school bus part-time in 1979, and worked at the high school library. She went to work full time in the 1908s, and then for Wal-Mart as their personnel person when they opened in 1997.

"You could say she went to work full time when the interest rates went up and the cattle prices went down," Vernon said.

Over the years Isaac has run about 275 cows, and weaned the calves at 675 pounds then fed them till they were about 750 pounds before taking them to the sales.

"I tried to sell them before the next calving," he said.

"He was a good conservationist," Karen said. "If it was dry he would run less cattle, and if there wasn't enough feed he would cut down on his numbers. He used the conservation farming practices, and tried to work to improve the land."

Vernon and Karen have one son, Kevin, who graduated from Good-

land high school in 1983, and lives north of Brewster.

Vernon's love of pine trees comes from his younger days when he went fishing in the Rockies of Colorado. He enjoys fishing and catching a good sized Rainbow Trout.

"I have always wanted to learn to be a fly fisherman," he said.

He likes to hunt pheasant and deer as well.

"There doesn't seem to be as many birds around these days because it is so dry," he said.

He said there were a number of prairie chickens that used to be around the area.

"There was one big male that would meet Karen and the bus at the corner every morning for weeks," he said. "Then I was out working near the barn and he would come up and do his dance.

"He stayed around for several weeks, and would be out there while you were there. He seemed to be keeping an eye on things."

Today there are a few holes in the windbreak rows, but they were not from disease.

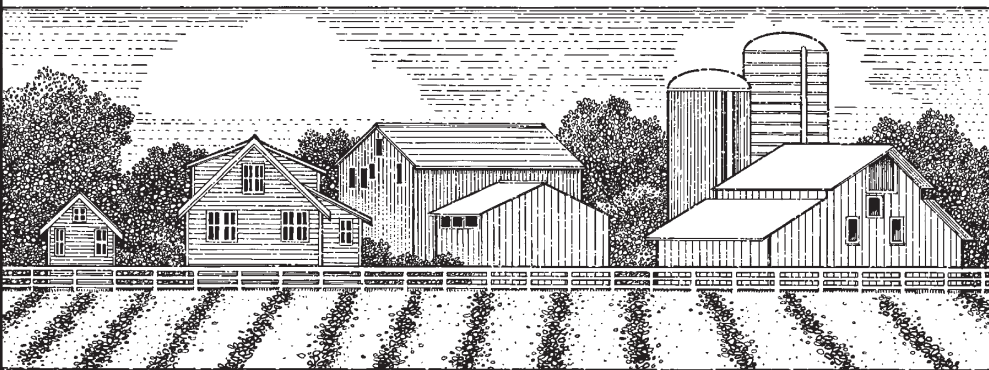
See ISAAC, Page 12



Karen and Vernon Isaac inside one of the corrals used to feed cattle before they were sold. The pine tree windbreak stretches to the south behind them and then turns to the west.

Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Star-News

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Isaac: "You have to have a love for growing pine trees"



Vernon Isaac said he won't give up his old 4-wheel drive pickup. It may seem sort of old and crusty, but it gets the job done, and is perfect for going out to check on fields and cattle.

Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Star-News

ISAAC, from Page 11

"We decided it was a good idea to thin out the trees," he said. "The idea was to sell off every other tree, but the people we were dealing with from the Colorado Front Range, were pretty picky.

"They come in with a 90-inch spade to take one of the trees. They put two on a trailer and one in the spade, and sometimes they would be overweight when they got to the port of entry.

"That is a lot of ground and weight. We have sold about 200 trees, and will

plant about 200 more this spring."

Today Vernon drives his old 4-wheel drive pickup to check on the farm, and says he will keep the pickup because it is reliable.

He remembers fondly an Australian Shepherd dog he had for nine years.

"He was Rusty," he said. "He was the best cow dog I ever had. He could work cattle better than three guys.

"He used to get right in the corrals and work the cattle, but he cleaned himself up. I'd get up in the morning and there would be a pile of dirt, but he would be cleaned up. I didn't have

to give him a bath very often."

Karen loves to read in her spare time, and does some craft work especially with pine cones.

"We always have a good supply of pine cones," she said. "I also love to cook, but working in town I don't do as much of that these days."

He loves the outdoors and the quiet solitude of rural life.

"You've got to love trees to plant them," Isaac of his efforts to grow his pine tree windbreak. "I love snow, and enjoyed walking out in the windbreak after a big storm."

Award nominations kept from year to year

Each year, area individuals and groups are honored by the Sherman County Conservation District for their efforts to promote conservation.

Candidates can be nominated by anyone, and if they don't win one year, they are still eligible for following years. A committee tours the county looking at the farms of nominees for the windbreak award and bankers award before selecting the winner.

Past winners of the bankers award are eligible to win the conservation-

ist of the year award. The district also gives special awards.

Among special awards, District Manager Sandra Rodgers said, have been the teacher of the year a couple of years ago and friends of conservation this year.

The committee that made the tour and selected winners this year included Dana Belshe, representing the Kansas State University Cooperative Extension; Larry McCants, representing area banks; Lonnie Whiteker, representing the conservation board;

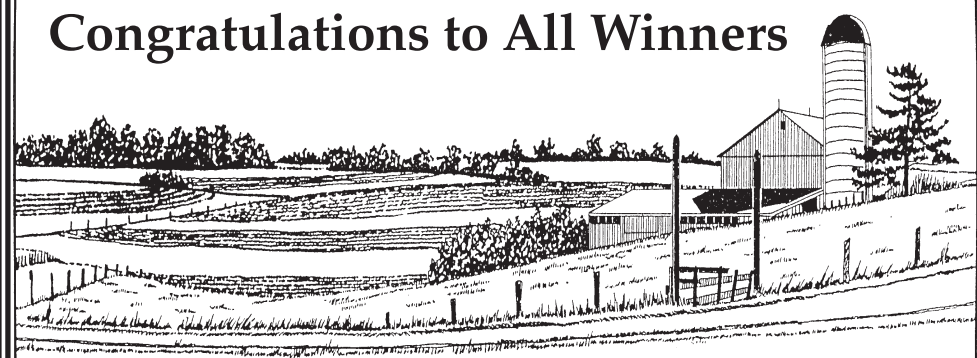
Larry Gutsch, representing Farm Services and Fred Wedel, district conservationist, Wedel said.

Rodgers keeps a list of nominees from year to year, Wedel said, and when one wins an award, that person comes off the list. Others are added throughout the year, he said.

Nominees can come from anyone, Wedel said, a neighbor, a business person, someone from the extension, other individuals.

"Sometimes I add someone," he said.

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WINDBREAK AWARD

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Isaac

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Honorable Mention Limerick Winner

Vance Johnson son of Marty and Beth Johnson

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Sherman County annual work plan 2004

Annual Work Plan:

The purpose of the Annual Work Plan, in conjunction with the Conservation Partnership, is to schedule and plan the conservation work needed that is essential to a sound soil and water conservation program for Sherman County. Additionally, the Annual Work Plan will allow for optimum planning with regards to our ongoing Conservation District programs for the coming year.

GOAL 1: REDUCE EXCESSIVE EROSION

STRATEGY: ASSIST NRCS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PLANNING

•Action 1: Promote a strong public education and awareness program using the District's Information Program.

•Action 2: Set priorities for dispersing the SWRCSP monies.

•Action 3: Assist NRCS with conservation planning.

STRATEGY: PROMOTE CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

•Action 1: Assist NRCS with development of new CRP contracts.

•Action 2: Promote public awareness of CRP through the District Information and Education Program.

•Action 3: Have grass seed available for sale.

•Action 4: Assist landowners in locating grass drills for their use.

•Action 5: Promote mowing and burning to achieve healthy grass stands through news articles, etc.

STRATEGY: ASSIST WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

•Action 1: Make resource assessment information available to all interested parties.

•Action 2: Assist NRCS with the development of EQIP contracts.

•Action 3: Promote EQIP through the District's Information and Education Program.

STRATEGY: PROMOTE CONSERVATION TILLAGE IN SHERMAN COUNTY

•Action 1: Use media to educate public on conservation tillage.

•Action 2: Cooperate with the Conservation Tillage Information Center.

STRATEGY: WHERE MUTUAL EROSION PROBLEMS ARE INVOLVED THE DISTRICT WILL

WORK WITH THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

GOAL 2: IMPROVE WATER MANAGEMENT

STRATEGY: ADMINISTER THE WATER RESOURCES COST SHARE PROGRAM

•Action 1: Administer the SWRCSP by setting priorities, processing applications and making every effort to disperse all monies allocated to Sherman County.

•Action 2: Promote irrigation efficiency in Sherman County through the Irrigation Initiative funds.

•Action 3: Serve as a pilot county for the Irrigation Water Management practice in the State Water Resources Cost Share Program.

STRATEGY: COOPERATE WITH GMD#4

•Action 1: The District will cooperate with GMD#4 in implementing the Irrigation Development Plan policies as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the District and GMD #4.

•Action 2: The District will assist NRCS personnel that are located at GMD#4.

•Action 3: The District will coop-

erate with GMD#4 concerning the Irrigation Initiative funds.

STRATEGY: MAKE PUBLIC AWARE OF NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION PLAN

•Action 1: Prepare project work plans for the NPS program and apply for NPS funds to address non-point concerns in Sherman County

•Action 2: Cooperate with the LEPG office in solving environmental concerns.

•Action 3: Administer the NPS funds by taking applications, processing them and make every effort to disburse all monies allocated to Sherman County.

GOAL 3: IMPROVE RANGE CONDITIONS

STRATEGY: INCREASE AWARENESS OF PRINCIPLES OF RANGE MANAGEMENT

•Action 1: Offer scholarship to Range Youth Camp.

•Action 2: District will consider selection of Range Management Award.

•Action 3: The District will have native grass seed for sale.

•Action 4: The District will prioritize and evaluate all range/livestock

State Water Resource Cost Share applications and prepare Grazing Management Plans for them.

•Action 5: Assist with any emergency CRP Haying and Grazing programs.

GOAL 4: WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

STRATEGY: PROVIDE MATERIAL FOR WINDBREAKS AND WILDLIFE PLANTINGS

•Action 1: Trees for windbreaks and wildlife plantings will be available for purchase through the District.

•Action 2: National Wildlife Week packets will be distributed to local schools.

•Action 3: Promote continuous CRP sign up and CRP enhancement incentives.

•Action 4: Cooperate with the local Pheasants Forever Chapter.

STRATEGY: DISTRICT WILL COOPERATE WITH KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS.

•Action: 1 Participate in Memorandum of Understanding with Wildlife & Parks for cost share funds to promote wildlife management practices.

See WORK PLAN, Page 14

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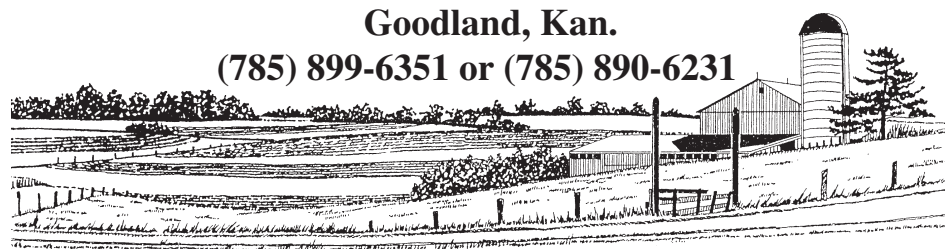
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Security program in early stages; storing carbon is goal

By Dan Farmer

The Conservation Security Program is in its early stages and as a result has taken longer than desired to implement.

An article in the Feb. 2 *High Plains Journal*, said the recently passed spending bill restored program funding which is set at \$41 million for this year. This means the program goes back to being an entitlement program and any farmer who is eligible can qualify for payments.

The bill restores approximately \$3.1 billion to the program for a total

of at least \$7 billion over the next 10 years.

With full funding restored the eligibility requirements will likely be opened to all farmers instead of limiting signups to priority watersheds.

With the new funding, a revised program rule and extended comment period may delay implementation of the program until the governments next fiscal year which begins Oct. 1, 2005. If the \$41 million remains unutilized this year it will be rolled over to the next fiscal year.

The program will stress storing Car-

bon in soil, and to qualify for payment at the highest priority within the program you will need to be practicing no-till or reduced tillage with emphasis in maintaining high residue levels (greater than 50 percent crop residue).

Tier 1 contracts are for 5 years; maximum payment is \$20,000 annually.

Tier 2 contracts are for 5-10 years; maximum payment is \$35,000 annually.

Tier 3 contracts are for 5-10 years; maximum payment is \$45,000 annually.

To qualify at the highest level you will need to address all resource concerns on your entire operation to a Re-

source Management System level that meets our NRCS Field Office Technical Guide standards. You must agree to additional enhancement activities as outlined in the sign-up announcement.

Soil quality practices include crop rotations, cover crops, conservation tillage practices, prescribed grazing, nutrient and manure management, providing adequate wind barriers.

Water quality practices include conservation tillage, filter strips, terraces, grassed waterways, managed access to streams, nutrient and pesticide management, prescribed grazing,

and irrigation water management.

Much of the benchmark assessment will be done by the potential applicant through the use of self-screening tools. If it appears the producer can meet the sign up criteria the producer prepares an application which includes a benchmark condition inventory and supporting materials.

Verification of the application information will be performed by conservation personnel. NRCS is working to automate much of the application process and a large part of the information needed to make an assessment can be accessed through existing tools and databases.

The program is for private working land uses which include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, rangeland, forested land and other non-cropped areas that are incidental to the agricultural operation.

The USDA is inviting public comments for a period of 60 days ending on March 2. You can send comments to the Conservation Operations Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013 or email to david.mckay@usda.gov; Attn: Conservation Security Program.

Sherman Conservation District work plan for 2004

WORK PLAN, from Page 13

GOAL 5: MANAGEMENT OF RIPARIAN AND WETLANDS STRATEGY: PROMOTE RIPARIAN AND WETLANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM

•Action 1: Use the news media to educate the public concerning riparian & wetlands protection.

•Action 2: Offer tree planting in riparian areas only through the State Water Resources Cost Share Program.

GOAL 6: INFORMATION AND

EDUCATION PROGRAMS STRATEGY: DISTRICT INFORMATION PROGRAM

•Action 1: The District will continue to direct an information program using the news media.

STRATEGY: PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

•Action 1: The District will offer their own Awards Program and select an outstanding cooperator.

•Action 2: The Annual Poster, Limerick and Essay contest along with the Hyper-Studio Stack contest will be

held in cooperation with the local school district to promote interest in Soil and Water Conservation.

•Action 3: Sandy Rodgers, District Manager will make conservation talks and tours available to interested parties.

•Action 4: Awards will be offered for fairbooths which have a conservation theme.

•Action 5: The District will contact the 4-H clubs and schools regarding the KACD Speech Contest.

•Action 6: Soil Stewardship mate-

rial will be provided to local churches.

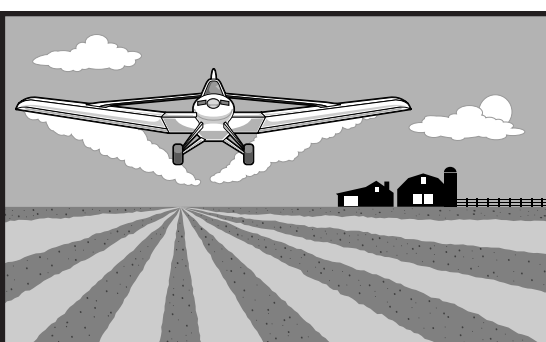
•Action 7: The District will be represented at Area and State conservation meetings.

•Action 8: The District will have a fairbooth.

•Action 9: The District will support and assist the Western Prairie RC&D.

•Action 10: The District will offer two scholarships to high school graduates going into an agricultural field.

See WORK PLAN, Page 15



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WORK PLAN, from Page 14

GOAL 7: MANAGEMENT SERVICES

STRATEGY: SUPPORT THE NORTHWEST KANSAS CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

•Action 1: Allow the District Manager to work with the Alliance to obtain additional funding for the District.

STRATEGY: PREPARE ANNUAL BUDGET

•Action 1: Part of the District's financing will be accomplished by working with the County Commis-

sion and the State of Kansas for matching funds. Other District activities will supplement the financial needs of the District.

STRATEGY: REVIEW MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

•Action 1: The District will review the memorandums of understanding with each cooperating agency.

STRATEGY: LONG RANGE PLANNING

•Action 1: The long range program will be reviewed.

STRATEGY: PROVIDE SERVICES TO COOPERATORS

•Action 1: Along with trees and

grass seed, the District will also handle marking flags, polymer, weed barrier, gyp blocks and rabbit netting.

STRATEGY: ANNUAL MEETING

•Action 1: Make all arrangements concerning the Annual Meeting, meals, speaker, awards, etc.

•Action 2: Cooperate with local banks, NRCS, and Extension Office to select Bankers Award recipients.

•Action 3: Prepare and distribute Annual Report and Financial Statement.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES, PROCEDURES, & POLICIES

Work planned by District Cooperators will be laid out by the Natural

Resources Conservation Service in the order requests are received. Consideration will be given to availability of equipment, materials, and labor.

Priority will be given to Highly Erodible Land and Compliance requirements regarding conservation planning.

Farmers and contractors will be used in surveys and checking out practices to more fully utilize the services of the NRCS personnel. Conservation plans will be developed whenever possible before the application of conservation practices or land use changes are made. These plans will include the proper use and treatment

of soil, water and related land resources. Cooperators will be urged to maintain conservation practices already applied.

The Sherman County Conservation District will meet the first Thursday after the first Tuesday of every month with the exception of July.

The Sherman County Conservation District will hold its Annual Meeting during the month of February.

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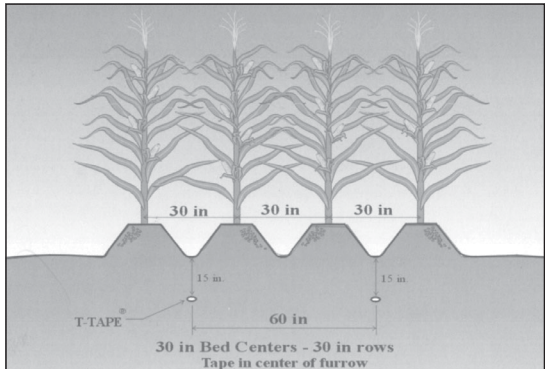


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