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Terraces help prevent

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP

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When you look at it one way, a terrace is really just a pile of dirt.

But when you look at it like a farmer, it's a necessary practicality. Steven, Greg and Stephanie Ritter knew that one man's pile of dirt was another's terrace, and when it was time to do something about erosion, they got right on top of it.

The Ritters all farm adjacent to each other, and with their parents, Sylvester and Margeret,

about six miles east and eight south of Oberlin, said Greg. Their terraces are located in Custer and Jennings townships, and were built up (thanks to C & C Construction of Norcatur) to replace the old ones last summer. They span a total of six and a half miles across the property, he said.

"Terraces help conserve soil by stopping water erosion," he explained. "Yes, we care about conservation, but it's practical too—they both go together."

Greg said that the family also practices other



TERRACES MAY SEEM subtle at first, but they're an important part of negating erosion. They act as a controlled area to stop the water so that gullies don't form in the fields.

— Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

Conservation: it counts

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP

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In times like these, with years like the last, conservation has never been more important. And neither, one could argue, has recognizing those who do it well.

"These awards are given to people who've done a good job to improve their land with some kind of conservation practice," said Byron Hale, of the Decatur County Extension Office. "It's a two-fold thing: one, to recognize those out there who are using these practices, and two, to create awareness and keep conservation in the forefront."

The annual awards were given by the Kansas Bankers Association at their banquet Monday at The Gateway. They were presented by the Key Banker, who this year was Doug Brown, of The Bank in Oberlin.

"There are quite a few different types they can get," said Mr. Brown of the awards. "There are some that fit here and some that don't. There's the wildlife habitat, water quality, soil conservation, windbreak, water conservation, and energy conservation award."

This year, he said, the association only gave out three awards—for soil conservation, windbreak and water quality—because no one was nominated for the other three.

"The Soil Conservation District plays a big part in nominating," said Mr. Brown, "because they know about the individuals and practices around here. The ceremony and

meal was put on by them, the Kansas Bankers Association, The Bank, Farmers Bank & Trust (both of Oberlin), and the Farm Credit of Western Kansas of Colby."

Mr. Brown said that because the banks are primarily agricultural, conservation practices are particularly important to them.

"When the farmer does a good job of holding back erosion and keeping residue on the field," he said, "all of that equates back to a good loan customer. The better the farmer, the better the loan customer. I'd say 95 percent of the people that we deal with could all qualify for these awards because of how they have taken a hold of their practices."

If you're interested in getting started, the first place to go is the Decatur County Conservation District office, at 410 S. Buffalo, in Oberlin, where you can meet with District Conservationist Matt Barnes

"We do technical assistance for free," Mr. Barnes said, "which is like consultations with people and land surveying. We do have several financial assistance programs, that will share in the cost of these practices, that are competitive, too—where your land is scored and competes with other people who have similar concerns in the county."

"A conversation is the place to start, and then we decide if the farmer's objectives meet the conservation guidelines. We can help them meet their concerns, and even show them things that they may not have known about."

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