

DON GOODFELLOW / CONSERVATION AWARD

Terraces increase field longevity

By RYAN CARLSON
Sometimes the key to a field’s long term health is making certain conservation improvements. That’s what Owner Mildred Helmer and Operators Donald and Eula Mae Goodfellow decided. Donald and Mildred are siblings who have had the field in their family for at least the past 50 years. “Over the years erosion takes its toll and you have to take care of it,” said Donald. Over those years erosion and other environmental factors have made farming the ground harder. This prompted Donald to ask his sister Mildred if they could build some terraces and waterways. The project lasted around five years because seeding the waterways became difficult during the two-year drought in Kansas. Last year’s spring rains finally helped get the waterway grasses seeded. The terraces themselves were a very minor

matter. Donald said they were installed by Haile Dirt Construction and only took around Three weeks to build. A terracing conveyer built just for the project was used



by the company. Donald said the conveyer allowed Haile Construction to move dirt a lot more efficiently than the standard grader. The newer equipment significantly speeds up the entire process. “He built a large terrace that, if maintained, should last a long time,” said Donald. Donald said conservationist efforts such as those to build terraces are very important. Donald said most of the land he farms is gullied and therefore needs terraced. Though these terraces

take more time and fuel to farm, in the long run they preserve the health of a field. “About everything I farm right now is terraced,” said Donald. Donald said a terrace is 2 to 3/10 of a drop for every 100 feet, rather than the standard one foot drop every hundred feet. He said this gradual decline prevents rain water from eroding fields. When rain water hits the terraces, it slowly flows into the waterway and finally out of the field. Donald and Mildred both remember the history of their family farm. Mildred said she remembered their father started with horses, and slowly switched over to a early 20th century tractor. Donald said that tractor had steel lugs instead of the now all too common rubber wheel. Today, he drives a tractor with a cab, air conditioning and a global positioning system (gps). “It’s a whole lot different today. We have houses on tractors,” said Mildred.



The Goodfellows and Mildred Helmer had 7,225 feet of terraces and 4.1 acres of water ways installed in a field their family has owned for the past 50 years. (from left) Don Goodfellow and his sister Mildred Helmer.

Conservation Stewardship Program opportunities for area farmers

By ASHLEY VISOCKY
Rice county farmers and ranchers have a great opportunity to receive technical support, cost-share, and incentive payments through the USDA. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has numerous different programs available to assist producers, but in this edition I’m going to focus on the Conservation Stewardship Program, or CSP. CSP is an incentive payment program for producers that have already met a high level of conservation and are interested in implementing specific “enhancements” to increase their conservation extent. Producers who sign up for CSP must enroll all land they are listed as the operator with FSA, and must get any landowners to sign a permission form stating they may enroll their land. Like all USDA programs, certain eligibility requirements must be met to be eligible for any Farm Bill payments. The contracts are 5 year commitments during which all the enhancements that were chosen are continually implemented. The first step is to come into the office and fill out an application. The state has not announced an applica-

tion deadline yet for this year, but when they do it will be advertised. Once that date has passed, all the signed applications will be processed. The second step is interview and program details. There are a series of questions that the producer must answer about their current operation. This is considered the “baseline data” and is used to determine initial eligibility. In addition to this, participants must choose enhancements that they wish to implement and integrate into their operation for the next 5 years (or beyond). Some examples of these enhancements include adding a cover crop into your crop rotation, or rotating feed & mineral areas around pastures. If you’d like to see a list of these enhancements, stop by our office or check out our website. After all of this information is entered into the computer system, the applications are ranked and funded (in ranking order) until the budget is spent. The payment amount is also based on what is entered into the computer – all the “baseline data” questions about your operation and each additional enhancement you choose are worth points, and the system runs equations that compute the points

to dollars. It’s really kind of a mystery at first, but the incentive payment you’ll be receiving and what’s expected of you will be clearly laid out before you ever sign an official contract with us. CSP participation is completely voluntary, and you are not tied-down to anything by just submitting an application. Of course there are a few hoops to jump through, but the benefits offered may be enough to help you finally get a head start on positive changes you’d like to see in your operation. We also have additional opportunities for producers who belong to socially disadvantaged groups, beginning farmers/ranchers, and limited resource farmers/ranchers. If you have a certain project in mind or have any questions, feel free to call me or stop by and we can discuss any assistance that may be available. And, as always, if being involved in a program doesn’t interest you, our technical assistance is always available as a service to tax-payers. Check out our website at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @ NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

A farm with bad luck

A farm fire north of Chase is a bad luck story. The problems in early rural Rice County can give you something to be thankful for. Some of the early farmers of Rice County seemed to have had a lot of problems. Frank and Mary Callis had a small country home on their first farm, which caught on fire in 1923. The fire sparks that night came from the barn that was already on fire. A general ring on the country telephone line brought some help, but the call did not go into the local telephone office. Perhaps there were too many people listening on the line, which would prevent a connection with the Chase Switchboard.

Henry Link and Neal Buckley mentioned that when they arrived to the site, that both buildings had almost burned to the ground. The strange thing was, that when Mrs. Callis made the general telephone call, she left the receiver hanging down. Women in their rural homes could hear all that was going on until the house fell down in flames. They rebuilt a house and later on, they rebuilt the barn. A tornado came through on May 19, 1930 and tore up all his buildings. Frank and Mary found a place in Chase to stay while looking for a home to purchase. They purchased a place on the southeast edge of Chase from Pearl Miner. It

seems like they liked the large hen house on the grounds. Perhaps they could clean it out and rent it to oil field workers or farm laborers. Friends helps as they prepared to move in. Paul Links helped to paper and paint the main 2 story house. On the first night living in the house, a very strong wind came and destroyed the hen house nearby. The same storm did some damage to the new home. The Callis couple lived there until going to their heavenly home. The home was then sold to A.C. Brady; he and his wife were called “Jiggs” and “Maggy” Brady. Written by Ag-Spy



The local Rice County USDA Service Center located at 1480 West Highway 56, has served Rice County for 71 years.

How do cover crops fit in your operation

When it comes to soil health, agriculture seems to have come full circle; we are once again learning from the past that soil health is important. Years ago, there were a few farmers that knew what they were doing when it came to soil health. We currently have the science and research to back that all up. Cover crops are becoming more popular as producers are finding a fit for cover crops in their operations. Cover crops have a lot of benefits, whether they are used for grazing/forage source or for soil health. There are numerous cover crop species and various mixes that a person can plant. You may have questions that should be addressed before you make a decision of what mix to use. Considering if grazing is done in the summer or winter, needing to build soil organic matter, or wanting to increase nitrogen to be available for the next crop are just a few considerations to think about when choosing the right cover crop. It’s an exciting time for agriculture

and soil health right now. Because of this, it is once again time for producers to be innovators. Short-term and long-term benefits of cover crops will be seen as the number of acres continues to increase. If you haven’t tried cover crops, the best way to see how they

will benefit your operation is to experiment. The Rice County Conservation District purchased a drill for the purpose of planting cover crops. For more information on renting the drill, you can call the conservation district at 620-257-3645 extension 303.

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