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Master Conservationist Awards

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It is a distinct pleasure to be with you this evening to present the Master Conservationist awards. I appreciate the opportunity to recognize those who have gone the extra mile to enhance Nebraska's natural resources and our way of life.

Their efforts take on even more importance in a year like this when drought conditions have threatened field crops, pastures, and rangeland, as well as water for livestock and the citizens of our state. Times like this underscore how important it is for us to recognize the delicate balance of nature.

The Master Conservationists we honor tonight have long recognized the need for windbreaks to protect both crops and soils. They understand the benefits of controlled grazing to maintain grass and ^{to} protect the soil, as well as to provide forage in the future. Others have installed terraces and grassed waterways on fragile land, as well as re-use pits for irrigation water. Riverbanks have been restored and wildlife habitats have been developed. These practices and many others always are important, and they take on new meaning in stressful ^{climatic} periods like the one of 2002.

Please accept our sincere thanks for your efforts over the years for the benefit of Nebraska and the citizens of our great state.

Dr. GARY HERBERT — DIRECTOR — UNIV NEBRASKA
WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH &
EXTENSION CENTER —
NORTH PLATTE

Dr. RICHARD FLEMING — Professor — EMERITUS UNL
Agric. Leadership, Education
& Communication Dept.

Master Conservationist Presentations—2002—Production Agriculture—**District A**

Our first Master Conservationist recognition in production agriculture goes to David and Wanda Hagstrom in District A, Nebraska's Panhandle. I would like to ask the Hagstroms to come forward. They are the third generation to operate the 3,000-acre dryland wheat-proso millet-fallow farm south of Kimball. The Hagstroms have continued conservation practices by adding 25,000 feet of terraces on their land and more than 9,700 feet on leased land. The flat-channel terraces are wide for big equipment. The structures are built with subsoil and the topsoil is returned where it was. Rich, loamy soil from diversions is layered on hills which become as productive as the rest of the field. They harvest wheat and millet with a stripper-header leaving taller stubble to capture more snow. Nearly 23,000 trees and shrubs were planted last year to enhance Conservation Reserve Program acres. Always willing to share ideas, Hagstrom outlined ways to convert CRP acres to crop land on a commercial videotape. Congratulations to the Hagstroms!

District B

Janet
Robert Price of Burwell is the Master-Conservationist in north-central Nebraska, District B. He operates "Gracie-Creek-Ranch" which includes 38,400 acres in northern Loup and southern Rock counties. Over the past 27 years, he has planted nearly 38,000 trees for soil and livestock protection. Price has installed more than 50,000 feet of cross fence, 143,000 feet of pipe to supply water for livestock, 16 water tanks, and excavated 12 ponds. He has capped 79 abandoned wells and is in the process of capping more to prevent contamination of groundwater. Price was among the first to use planned grazing. His livestock give grass "a good healthy clip" and then move on so that 95 percent of the pasture is in a "resting stage" at any one time. The grass has time to gain vigor and tillers. ^{His} Animals move in "larger-herds" which reduces labor and energy costs. Weaning in a pasture rather than dry lot reduces stress on the animals. The ranch is a showcase for NU Animal Science students and many livestock groups. Congratulations to ~~Robert~~ ^{the} Price!

LuAnn Brockmeier
~~Food + Water~~ Will
ACCEPT THE AWARD.

District C

Master Conservationist recognition in District C, northeast Nebraska, goes to LuAnn Brockmeier of West Point. She operates a 955-acre row-crop family farm with her children ~~Todd Brockmeier, Scott Brockmeier and Shelley Wright~~. The biggest impact of Brockmeier's conservation efforts is "controlling erosion" on highly erosive land with over 36,000 feet of terraces, 490 acres of no-till, 490 acres of contour farming, and almost 60 acres of buffer strips and grassed waterways. More than 5,000 trees have been planted and over 24 acres have been "seeded to native grasses. The second greatest impact of conservation practices is on wildlife. Two dams provide "habitat" for migratory waterfowl and nesting for ducks. A fertilizer "containment" facility was constructed in 1999 to control "leakage" that could cause pollution to streams and lakes. They work with soil, water and "Pheasants-Forever" groups and ^{they} encourage access to see "conservation benefits." "Congratulations" to the Brockmeier family!

District D

David Nelson, of Upland ^{and PAT} ~~is~~ ^{ave} the Master Conservationist [↑] in District D, south-central and southwest Nebraska. He produces "crops-and-livestock" on 2400 acres of crop land "of-which" 1400 acres are irrigated and 600 acres are in pasture. He began conservation activities in 1967 by hand-planting "trees for a one-fourth mile farmstead-windbreak" and later he added 200 trees in a pivot irrigation "corner" for wildlife and cattle production. He dug the first irrigation water "re-use pit" in 1974 and has added additional "pits" to capture "irrigation water on all" gravity-irrigated fields. Several miles of terraces "with-underground-outlets" have been installed. He rotates corn, summer fallow, and wheat on 1,000 acres of dryland. Summer fallow crop land is "minimum-tilled" for conservation. Ridge planting is used "to-improve" soil conservation and yields. A tireless promoter of conservation in his local community, Mr. Nelson also provides "information" about conservation to a "wide-audience" through his column in the Minden Courier. Congratulations to ~~the~~ ^{the} Nelson!

District E

Master Conservationist honors in District E, southeast Nebraska, go to the late Lloyd Smith and Jeff and Melissa Scow of Shelby. The farm was purchased from the railroad by Mr. Smith's grandfather in 1879. Mr. Smith continued to practice the conservation ethic he learned from his father and grandfather on the homestead. A great nephew, Jeff Scow purchased the land and continues the conservation tradition which he considers "economically sound practices." The Scows have a cow/calf operation, 200 acres of alfalfa, and a corn/bean rotation on 700 acres. Conservation practices include: tree planting for riparian buffer strips which began in 1890 and has continued ever since, terraces on 120 acres, windbreaks to protect soil and cattle, cross-fencing and planned grazing of 200 acres, living snow fence, ridge till, fertilizer regulators, and conversion of gravity irrigation to six center pivots. Local school groups bring classes to the farm to see tree plantings, wild turkeys, and other wildlife. Congratulations to the Scows!

Master Conservationist Presentations--**Residential**

Master Conservationist recognition in the Residential category goes to Arlyn and Jeannine Cox of Champion. Their project began in 1992 with the purchase of 160 acres of Frenchman River property. What followed was removal of junk, and changing a trail to a road, leading to six ponds and two artesian wells. Then a neighbor offered a cabin to move to the property for family use. They planted a windbreak of Juniper evergreen trees along the road and purchased a tree spade to move in a variety of trees. Then a second cabin was moved to the site and a rural school swing set was purchased. Frequent visitors resulted in a decision to stock the ponds with fish. Wildlife are abundant and many make their homes in the pond area. Then a group of first to fourth-grade students planted specifically-labeled butterfly plants in the shape of a butterfly. Now known as Cox's Ponds, the area is shared for use by conservation and wildlife groups. The Imperial Foundation offers a SCORE (Science Camps Offer Rewarding Experiences) Camp every other summer for children in grades 1 to 8. Congratulations to Arlyn and Jeannine Cox!

Master Conservationist Presentations--**Community--Private Business**

No award was ~~given~~ ^{MADE} in the Community Private Business Category this year

KEN & MARY KROHN
SHARON PATRAS
RAY AHRENS

Master Conservationist Presentations--**Community Public**

More than five years ago a "community-project" was initiated to remove unsightly weeds and junk at the Riverside Park in Neligh (Nee-lee) and to commemorate Neligh's (Nee-lee's) "favorite" pacer-horse, Shade On. Under the general sponsorship of the Neligh (Nee-lee) Chamber of Commerce, public and private groups, and individuals "received approval" to reclaim 25,000 square feet of wasteland and replace it with trees, grass, shrubs, and various other plants that would "withstand" the local climate. It also included "stabilization" of a section of the Elkhorn River "subject to erosion, a garden, and a gazebo which is a replica" of the starter's stand used at the park's racetrack. The project includes 10,000 feet of greenspace for a "nature-walkway" along the riverbank to the Neligh (Nee-lee) Mills historical site and to the Cowboy Trail. Plans also include a garden with Shade On's racing colors and a marker for the horse. More projects are being carried out by "youth-and-adults" to further enhance Riverside Park. "Congratulations" to the people of Neligh (Nee-lee) for this fine project!

Two new categories for youth were added this year. They are the Youth Group Award and the Individual Youth Award for those 19 years of age and under.

Master Conservationist--Community Youth Group

BRYCE KINTIC

DAVE BARUARD

BRUCE KINTIC

Kyle Grove

-Teacher

The first Community Youth Group Award goes to the Superior High School FFA Chapter for the Republican River Bank Erosion Project. During the past four years, they contributed over 700 man hours planting and staking 25 cottonwood logs, cutting and planting hundreds of willow cuttings, planting 75 native grass clumps, and 150 bare-root trees. They also cleaned up loose limestone rock spilled in the area. Forty-two FFA members were involved and 150 other students helped. The project was completed with technical and financial assistance from the local Natural Resources Conservation Service staff. By working within the technical plan, the FFA chapter had an impact that a piecemeal approach would not have provided. They used a pull-type tree planter with mulching weed barrier fabric, a new technique implemented by the local NRCS. A Kansas NRCS official submitted the project for an award program. The entry won both Kansas and Northern Plains Regional Earth Team Volunteer Awards. Congratulations to the Superior FFA Chapter!

Master Conservationist--**Community Youth--Individual**

Tyler Coffey of Omaha is the first Master Conservationist in the Community Youth Individual category. A member of Boy Scout Troop 324, Mr. Coffey decided to build a wildlife-observation-deck within the Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area for an Eagle Scout project. The 20-acre site already consisted of a native grass stand with some boundary tree plantings. Shrubs were moved near the observation deck to enhance the area. Wildlife habitat development was achieved by adding forbes and legumes in the short-grass prairie. Alley-ways were mowed to allow visitors to observe wildlife as they feed, rest, and pass through the area. Since the alley-ways are only 10 feet wide, wildlife can escape into grass cover to avoid predators. The deck was designed to fit the native landscape and to create a non-intrusive situation by placing a shelter near the trail so users would have easy access. Mr. Coffey provided the leadership for 15 Boy Scouts and their parents who participated in the project. He has received the Eagle Scout Award for his efforts. Congratulations to Tyler Coffey!

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