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Opening Comments Before Master Conservationist Presentations

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"JOEL" Long

Opening Comments
Before Master Conservationist Presentations
October 27, 2004

It is a real-pleasure to participate in this recognition program honoring the 2004 Master-Conservationists. We are grateful for the partnership with the Omaha World-Herald in this unique program. In an effort to keep the program in tune with current developments in soil-and-waster-conservation, a special-committee is considering the idea of including conservation-easements in the 2005 program. Some members of the committee are in the audience tonight. We appreciate the-efforts of members of the Omaha World-Herald, Natural Resources Districts, the USDA Natural-Resources Conservation-Service, and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources in carrying out this program.

The Master Conservationist program is an example of the many-partnerships which make it possible for the University's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources to carry out its three-fold mission of teaching, research, and extension ^{education} outreach to Nebraskans in all walks of life. As a land-grant institution, we are committed to extending educational-opportunity and disseminating

Dr. RICHARD FLEMING

our research findings to citizens across this great state. It is a responsibility we take very seriously. We appreciate your support and the trust you have placed in us to fulfill this responsibility.

The Master Conservationist program provides an "opportunity" to call attention to the results of applying current and new technology in the wise use of our soil and water resources. The recipients we are about to honor have excelled in the wise use of their natural resources.

(Master Conservationist script follows.)

MASTER CONSERVATION PRESENTATIONS – 2004

September 27, 2004

Production Agriculture – District A

Our first Master Conservationist in Production Agriculture this evening is Alton (All-ton) and Eleanor Lerwick of Lyman in the Panhandle. Mr. Lerwick, please come forward. The crop and cow-calf operation includes 1,560 acres of dryland, 240 acres of irrigated land, 1800 acres of dryland pasture, and 800 acres of rented pasture. It is a joint-operation with his son, Dean Lerwick. Minimum and no-till systems are used to control both wind and water erosion. The dryland rotations are wheat- millet-sunflowers-fallow or wheat-millet-fallow. These rotations produce a cash-income increase because a crop is produced every year that is equal to or above winter wheat. A planned rotational-grazing-system was established in 2000. The optimum calving-date was moved to April 15 to better utilize forages in conjunction with rotational-grazing. Metering of wells allows maximum-use of water. Nearly 5,000 trees have been planted for livestock protection and wildlife habitat.

Lerwick is a member of the NU Panhandle Research and Extension Center's Dryland Vision Board, and presents information on "innovative" conservation methods to others in Wyoming and Nebraska. Congratulations!

Production Agriculture – District B

Master Conservationists in the north-central district are Greg and Susan Gehr (Gill) and Lee and Janice Lōseke (Lō-ski) of Ericson. Before retirement, Lōseke used Caterpillar machinery to control blowouts and bring them back to grass, occasionally “astonishing” neighbors. Now, son-in-law Greg Gill and daughter, Susan Gill, manage the 4,880-acre ranch.

Conservation practices are paying dividends. As a result of tree planting, cross-fencing, installing a water distribution system, and prescribed grazing, it was “not-necessary” to cut cattle numbers after years of drought. Operating costs have been reduced because less labor is required to move cattle through the grazing system. They plan to return 160 acres of “irrigated-cropland” to grass and irrigated-grass rather than row crops in the sandy soil. Neighbors notice conservation measures, and the Gills readily share results and serve on local groups. Congratulations!

Production Agriculture – District C

Don and Pat Adelman (A-del-man) of Madison are the Master Conservationists in the northeast district. Don Adelman and his son-in-law, Dale Becker, operate at 3,036-acre “diversified” grain-and-livestock farm. They farrow 60 sows twice a year, sell feeder pigs, and run 160 feeder cattle through pasture-and-fat-lot every year. They have installed over 15,000 feet of terraces, 29 acres of grassed waterways, 2956 acres in no-till, participate in Lower Elkhorn NRD “Deep-Soil” Testing-program, and planted several thousand trees for field and farmstead windbreaks. The steadily-improving crop-yields, reduced fuel consumption, and reduced maintenance on grassed waterways “provide testimony” to the sustainability of their farming system. They use yield-monitors to identify “problems” in a field and follow up with soil testing to “pinpoint” nutrient-deficiencies. Their operation is a “living-demonstration” of effective soil-and-water conservation activities in their neighborhood. Congratulations!

“observe their farming operations and equipment.”

Congratulations to the Sullivans.

Production Agriculture – District D

Master Conservationist recognition in the south-central district goes to the sixth generation of the Sullivan family of Wallace—John and Donna, Michael and Terry, ⁺ Douglas and Michelle. The 5,000-acre unit includes over 2100 acres of irrigated corn and more than 2800 acres of wheat and soybeans. Although some of the trees planted by homesteader John L. Sullivan in the mid-1880s are still standing, some of their 50,000 trees are replanted most every year. Water-conservation mulch has been installed on 30,000 trees. Over 900 acres are in the Conservation Reserve Program, mostly on pivot corners. The Sullivans adapt existing equipment to their needs and have built or rebuilt over 20 miles of terraces and five dams for flood control. As a result, the Sullivans will be in a better position than most to adapt to the new water allocations which go into effect in 2005 under the Republican River-Compact Settlement. They host no-till and ecofollow training and demonstrations and are committed to educating youth. They regularly invite Wallace FFA and 4-H members to

Production Agriculture – District E

GLENN JOHNSON
Manager
Lower PLATTE South WARD

Jerry Barger and Tammy Steidley (Styd-ly) of Davey are the Master Conservationists in the southeast district. They have a

combined corn, soybean, Quarter Horse, and cattle operation and a pheasant and deer hunting business on 2,000 acres.

Yearling heifers and horses have replaced the long-time, cow-calf program. No-till is used on all cropland and tile drain

terraces are used on 1,000 acres. Warm-season grasses and legumes have been established on more than 600 acres. There

are 450 acres in the conservation reserve program, 50 acres in riparian buffers, 30 acres in grassed waterways, and 60 acres

in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Six dams and dugouts have been built. Wildlife enhancement projects

include wild flowers, shrub plots, third year burning, shredding, and six food plots for wildlife winter-feeding. After crops are

harvested in the fall, attention is focused on the hunting

business. A total of 350 rooster pheasants and several deer were harvested on the farm in the 2003-2004 harvest season.

Proceeds from hunting help finance conservation practices.

Promoting and helping others with conservation activities are
top priorities. Congratulations to Jerry Barger and Tammy
Styd-ly!

Private Residence

No Award Given in 2004

Community Public

There are two Master Conservationists in this category.

The first Master Conservationist recognition in this category goes to the Clearwater Public Schools Outdoor Classroom. Jeff Meyer will accept the award. During the 2000-2001 school, Meyer was a member of the AmeriCorps Teacher Corps program. One requirement was completion of a service-learning project which stressed using students to assist in performing a project to benefit the school and the community. A neglected area 100 feet by 40 feet which surrounds the school on three sides was selected for the project. Six classrooms overlook the area. Patrons and parents in the community were informed of the project and endorsed the outdoor classroom idea. An ecology class began researching which plants, shrubs, flowers, grasses, and trees would be best to plant, taking into consideration soil type, rainfall, and shade. After selecting the plans, the Ecology and Plant and Animal Science classes began designing landscape ideas. A local farmer provided feedlot soil. Tillers were

"donated" to break the ground and plants of all kinds were donated by people in the community. The city supplied mulch and the Library "donated" an array of perennials. "Project-Wild" donated "packets" of native grasses and wildflower seeds. Local nurseries also provided assistance. Bird houses have been added along a path. Now teachers and students at all grade levels use the Outdoor Classroom year round. Congratulations to the Clearwater Public Schools!

The second Master Conservationist recognition in this category goes to the Omaha Raptor Team. Lisa Bough (Boo), Jenny Hendricksen, and Sherry Seibert (Sy-bert) will receive the award. The team of licensed-volunteers presents "innovative" education programs tailored to meet the needs of schools, civic groups, and special events. Their "live-ambassadors" are non-releasable owls, hawks, and falcons that are birds of prey naturally found in Nebraska. These large and accomplished "fliers" are seldom victims of other predators but struggle to

“survive” in a constantly-changing environment. The Raptor Team develops and “carries-out” educational and conservation activities in conjunction with the Audubon Society of Omaha and the Papio-Missouri River Natural-Resources-District. The group works out of the Heron Haven Wetland facility, a unique wildlife sanctuary in Omaha, and recently “built” two outdoor aviaries for visitors to view raptors at the end of guided hikes. The group maintains American Kestrel boxes along portions of the Interstate Highway through Omaha and the Kennedy Freeway. During the past six years, the Omaha Raptor Team has presented over 1,000 programs. They reach about 13,000 youth and adults “annually”. Presentations have been made in Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, Columbus, Norfolk, Nebraska, City, and other cities. Congratulations to the Omaha Raptor Team.

Community–Youth Individual

No Award Given in 2004

Community-Youth Group

The Community Youth Group Master Conservationist
"recognition" goes to the Schuyler FFA chapter for their "Trees 4
All" project. Three Chapter members—Lloyd Cuda (^{CHOO-DA}~~Kee-da~~),
Rob Clausen (Claw-son) and Brand^{er} Marxsen-and their
advisors, Tom Wheeldon and Kevin Behrens (Bear-ans),
"agricultural educators", will accept the award. After research
showed that less than 2 percent of Nebraska's land area is
planted to trees, the FFA members decided to help "design"
windbreaks. They make recommendations on "plant-selection"
as part of a Natural Resources class and develop powerpoint-
presentations to "show" various alternatives to a landowner for
"final approval." Then they assist with preparation of the site,
planting, and care of the windbreak. They have designed
windbreaks for four sites. Three windbreaks provide wind
protection and aesthetics for rural homes and "one" provides
wind-protection for a calving-area. All windbreaks were
approved by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
in Colfax County. In 2003 the chapter received a grant from

the Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association of 100 trees for [^]each["] of three years to establish a tree and shrub nursery. [^]Now["] the students are able to show others the trees that are adapted to the area. The Lower Platte North Natural-Resources District [^]helped["] the students secure plant materials and machinery for planting. FFA alumni helped the students plant trees. Congratulations to the Schuyler FFA Chapter.