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### 2006 Master Conservationist Presentations

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Sept 25, 2006

## 2006 MASTER CONSERVATIONIST PRESENTATIONS

### PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE – District A

Kirk and William Laux (locks) of Bridgeport in the Panhandle will receive the first Master Conservationist recognition in Production Agriculture. Will Kirk and William please come forward? This family limited-partnership includes 5,000 acres of rangeland, 160 acres of dryland, 1200 acres of irrigated land, a cow-calf operation, and a feedlot. They began farming in the 1960s and later purchased several "tired" and eroded units. These units were improved by "applying" erosion control practices including seeding, cross-fencing, and improved watering. Because obtaining quality-grass seed was a challenge, they began producing certified-seed. The operation is part of a major demonstration project on no-till and limited irrigation in the Pumpkin Creek watershed. The project is funded by a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant in cooperation with the North Platte Natural Resources District and the UNL Panhandle Research and Extension Center. Congratulations to the Locks!

## **DISTRICT B – No Award**

## **DISTRICT C**

Master Conservationist recognition in northeast Nebraska goes to the Hellbusch (hellbush) family of Belgrade. The family operation includes Roger and Janet and two sons--Todd and Troy and his wife, Marianne. Like his father who made terraces on steep pasture hillsides, Roger is "quick" to embrace new ideas. The farm was "the first" in the area to implement sediment basins which then attracted the attention of neighbors. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service used the basins as an "example" of "what" could work on other farms. Reduced tillage practices were installed to stop erosion, reduce input costs, keep more moisture, and allow for yields in some years when there might have been none. Trees have made a big difference in the protection of livestock and the farmstead. The re-seeding of hillside pastures keeps the forage-quality "high". By working with smaller parcels of land, it is possible to "change" pastures from brome to better forage grasses and provide better feed for livestock.

Congratulations to the Hellbusch Family!

## **DISTRICT D**

Steve Grudzinski (grud - jinski) of Loup City is the Master Conservationist in central Nebraska. He is accompanied by Sheila McIntyre. Steve is a first-generation farmer who recognizes the value and benefits of rotational grazing, no-till farming, conservation range management, windbreaks, and other practices on 2000 acres of range and pasture land, and 100 acres of cropland. The planned-grazing-system has increased the carrying capacity of grassland 30 percent. Any precipitation that falls is captured and there is virtually no run-off. Planned grazing also has resulted in fewer weeds in pastures, so Steve has not found it necessary to spray for weeds in 17 years. This has resulted in significant savings in chemical and application costs. He also was part of a test program to determine the survivability and adaptability of non-native trees and shrubs to Nebraska's soils and climate. Steve has taken many friends and neighbors on tours of the operation. He is a strong proponent of sustainable agriculture. Congratulations to Steve Grudzinski.

## DISTRICT E

Master Conservation recognition in the southeast district goes to Todd and Kim Tyler of Clarks. *→ DARRELL KEISEN - CENTRAL PLATTE N.R.D.* Prior to restoring their land, the Tylers "struggled" with row crops because spring-planting often was delayed by wet ground. High water levels often "limited" crop development. In 2000, they initiated wetland and upland restoration. This was accomplished by "enrolling" in the Nebraska Soil-and-Water Conservation Program, Wetland Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, and the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program: "Riparian-Buffer." The greatest benefit to the environment has been "enrollment" of the 900-acre farm in the Wetland Reserve Program. They have "restored" nearly 640 acres of wetlands and "renovated" 260 acres of upland pasture. Several miles of sloughs were restored. They contracted with the Central Platte Natural Resources District to "plant" over 10,000 shrubs and "install" nearly eight miles of weed barrier. Congratulations to the Tylers!

## COMMUNITY PUBLIC – 2 MASTER CONSERVATIONISTS

Two programs in the Community Public Category will receive Master Conservationist recognition.

We will begin with Jenner Park, a fixture in Loup City. Robert J. Piontkowski (pint-kuski) will represent Jenner Park tonight. The privately-owned amusement park was founded by Henry Jenner in 1889. Jenner Park included zoo animals, various collections, Indian artifacts, bowling and shooting galleries, and historical relics, including an Egyptian mummy. The park closed in 1942. Loup City purchased the park in 1972 and began restoring the property by implementing a four-step improvement plan. While zoo animal cages which were built into steep hillsides no longer are occupied by bears and lions, these cages are still filled with imaginary beasts in the minds of youngsters who play there today. Rob remembers playing in the park as a youth. He and his friends called a large part of the park the "Jungle" because of dense underbrush and ~~untended~~ untended heavy stands of trees. While not a new idea, the restoration work at Jenner's Park inspired creation of a compost pile for Loup City. By clearing and re-seeding, the

park now has a "open" feel. Parents can monitor their children easily and the muddy slopes have been "reduced" for better access.

The park now has two picnic shelters with a large grill.

Playground equipment was purchased in 1998 with assistance of the Peter Kiewit Foundation of Omaha. The restoration project

"transformed" the park from the town "eyesore" to a place of community pride. The impact was "most noticeable" during celebration of Rob Pint-kuski Day. "That" is when members of the community "thanked him" for his work as a city employee and for the many hours he devoted outside his "normal" work day.

Congratulations to Loup City and Rob Pint-kuski!

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The second community Master Conservationist recognition goes to the Clean Lakes Council of the Walnut Creek Land and Recreation

Area in the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. Barry Keller of ~~Papillon~~ <sup>PAPILLION</sup> will accept the award. The Clean Lakes

Council was started in the spring of 1999 to "inform" the public "why" the facility was built and to explain its purpose within the community as well as the "importance" of the investment. Among

other things, the Council was "instrumental" in establishing a Pack-in Pack-out policy to "inform" the members of the public of their "responsibility" to take care of the park and to take responsibility for its aesthetic beauty. This policy still is in use today and is the "only" recreation area in the Omaha Metro area that uses this policy for trash. Ultimately, it has been a "huge success" and the park users have accepted it as a "valuable" management-tool along with the park staff. The Council also helped establish rules and regulations for the 4.5 miles of Equestrian trails which also serve as a cross-country-course for <sup>students at</sup> the new Papillion LaVista High School. After developing the equestrian trailhead and roadway, the Council was involved in developing a Youth Primitive Campsite. This site is a day-use area which also "doubles" as a weekend camping area for youth groups. Over the years, the Council has been actively involved in bringing the community together and providing a "safe" and aesthetically-beautiful-environment. The Clean Lakes Council has served as an "example" for the formation of "other groups" in the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District in the Omaha Metro area. Congratulations to the Clean Lakes Council!

7 ↓  
Hand Mike to BARRY KELLER



Our final Master Conservationist recognition goes to a **Community Youth Group** —The Cedar Canyon Schoolyard Habitat Project at Gering. Ray Boize (voice with a b - boise) a volunteer and Lois Herbel, former principal, will accept the plaque. Cedar Canyon School was a Class I school with K-8 enrollment of 90 students when the project began in 2002 and was completed in 2003. The purpose of the project was to transform a weed-laden corner of the school yard, 60 by 100 feet, into an attractive, functional, outdoor-classroom-environment. Lois and Ray secured a \$7,500 Greenspace grant through the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for tree planting and wildlife establishment. The school and <sup>the</sup> community provided a matching in-kind \$3,000 contribution. Money was raised by the students, no school district funds were used. Students and parents hailed in 12 loads of soil, prepared the area, and built a concrete-pond equipped with a return-flow fountain. Xeriscaping, using low maintenance native grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees, was incorporated into the landscape design. Mr. Boise, a naturalist, designed a system to allow runoff - water

~~water~~ from the school building's roof to flow into a rock-lined drain area that simulated a dry river bottom. This filter system kept the higher pH runoff water and its foreign material away from the pond where it would have been harmful to fish and water plants. The runoff water is used to water outlying landscape plants. The pond provides a habitat for insects, other invertebrates, amphibians, and fish, as well as another water source for surrounding wildlife. The classroom enhanced learning-  
opportunities in science, history, visual interpretation, social skills, and creative thinking while providing many teachable moments and also helping meet Nebraska Department of Education standards. The project received the National Wildlife Federation's 2003 Youth Conservation Award and was designated in 2005 as the National Wildlife Federation School-Yard-Habitat. The project serves as a model for others and has increased awareness of grants and support available through local, state, and national organizations and government. Congratulations to the students, parents, and faculty of Cedar Canyon School.