

LOW COST COW/CALF PRODUCTION

The Bulletin For Alumni Of The School

Volume 4

Number 7

The Progressives

Get With The Program

Dust and the Soil Erosion Service (SES) arose out of the dust bowl in '33 and the SES commenced activities in SW Wisconsin. The Soil Conservation Act became active in Apr '35 and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) replaced the SES. The first Conservation District was formed Aug '37 in North Carolina, establishing methods to assist farmers. From there, the SCS went nationwide, cooperating with 3000 districts. On Oct 20, '94 the SCS became politically correct by changing its name to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS (as well as doing what it used to do) administers several new Natural Resource Conservation cost-share programs. One of these is Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).

7 Counties in Kansas

About 2½ years ago, Dwayne Rice¹ was transferred to NRCS in Barber County, KS, just a bit west of southcentral KS. He brought with him expertise gained from stints with the old SCS, beginning in '89 in Beaver and Garfield counties of OK and Carroll county of GA. Dwayne was assigned to an ongoing Range Forage and Livestock Program that, at the time, had 42 active program ranchers in a 7-county area. There are now 68 project ranches in the program. The program is unique in the sense that the Ranchers choose programs and/or practices that meet their business needs. NRCS draws on various sciences and disciplines and integrates its contributions into a plan for the whole property. NRCS teaches Ranchers the **principles** of sound ranch management for better decision making. These principles range from goal setting, basic economics, forage and land management, all the way to on-site monitoring visitations. *Since the NRCS evolved from the SCS, there must be some soil science involved.* The Rancher and the NRCS representative walk the land together to determine optimal paddock arrangement and size and potential water sources and development.

A few of the project Ranchers, along with others in the 7-county region, joined together to form a special group called **Bootstraps**. The name/organization is patterned after the "Bootstraps" program developed by the Todd and Mellette Conservation Districts in SD² (more on that later). The 27-member group is relentless in the pursuit of knowledge. In order to achieve the educational goals of Bootstraps, Dwayne applied for an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grant. **Bingo, he got it!** With monies available, scholarship funds were set up to help defray the cost of attending special schools. Currently, 15 members have taken advantage of the scholarship funds by attending Ranching For Profit and Holistic Management Schools. Other Schools attended were K State's 2-day Grazing School and 2-day Cow/Calf Conference and the U of NE 3-day Management Intensive Grazing Workshop. This June, 6 members of Bootstraps attended our Low Cost Cow/Calf Production School in Pratt, KS. At the behest of those who could not attend, we were asked to return next year, although two weeks earlier (before wheat harvest). It's on the calendar.

Boots For Walking

One activity the KS Bootstrappers have found very rewarding is the "Pasture Walk." As a group, the Ranchers (along with NRCS) walk across another member's land. This event is replicated annually for comparison. Progress relative to succession, plant density, mineral and water cycles, etc. is evaluated. The Bootstraps group holds a series of winter meetings with experts in various fields - Dave Pratt, CA Farm Advisor and teacher of RFP, K State specialists in Holistic Mgt., the Noble Foundation economics group and the accounting firm of Kennedy and Coe on estate planning. Later in '98, the group will be visited by land quality health expert Charlie Orchard from Montana.

To summarize, it's all about education. Assistance is out there. **GO-FOR-IT!!**

EPA and Ranchers?

*"Bootstraps" of SD started with 26 families and 23 ranches in '91. Shortly after, 30 additional ranches joined the program. The program's goal is to teach people "to use natural resources wisely to stabilize agriculture, the economy and the community." The program uses an Holistic Resource Management (HRM) approach to ranching. The major cost of implementing an HRM approach is time. To get the program up and running, however, the ranchers applied for and received a 2-year, \$50,000 EPA and SD Department of Environment and Natural Resources grant in '92. Nice going. **Does the National Cattlemen's Beef Association have funds for the continuing education of its members?***

Rumors

"We're working with area ranchers and our district NRCS people to get a KS-type Bootstraps program off the ground down here." Thank you, David Kitner, Texas.

Schools In 1998 - '99

Edmonton, AB January 18 - 21, '99

Red Deer, AB February 1 - 4, '99

Lethbridge, AB February 16 - 19, '99

Linda Lynch-Staunton

Beefbooster Management Ltd.

#226, 1935-32 Ave NE

Calgary, AB T2E 7C8

(800) 668-1529 or (403) 291-9771

Billings, MT October 5 - 8, '98

Redding, CA November 9, - 12, '98

Ogallala, NE December 9, - 12, '98

Kirksville, MO March 22 - 25, '99

Tucson, AZ April 5 - 8, '99

Pratt, KS May 18 - 21, '99

Dick Diven

Agri-Concepts, Inc.

12850 N. Bandanna Way

Tucson, AZ 85737-8906

(800) 575-0864 or (520) 544-0864

¹ NRCS, 800 W 3rd, Medicine Lodge, KS 67104-8002. Tel. (316) 886-3721.

² For Information: NRCS, White River, SD 57579-0709. Tel. (605) 259-3252.