Retirement Reception for Paula Sramek

Friday, October 28 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

Program Technician, Paula Sramek has decided to retire from FSA after 30 years of dedicated service to USDA and to Rush County farmers. Paula’s career began as an office clerk in October of 1986. Through her tenure she has served with responsibilities of production adjustment, farm reconstitutions, farm transfers, farm records, payment limitations, payment eligibility appeal & reviews, sodbuster/swampbuster provisions, CAT insurance, bankruptcies, claims, AG Credit functions as well as being a National Program Technician Trainer for the state of Kansas.

Her knowledge, quality of service and expertise will be greatly missed by farm producers and co-workers throughout Kansas. An open house is scheduled for Paula on October 28, 2016 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at the Rush County Service Center. Please come join us in bidding Paula farewell.
Salina, Kansas, September 19, 2016—The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced November 18, 2016, as the first cut-off date to apply for fiscal year 2017 funds through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

“EQIP provides Kansas agricultural producers a wide range of opportunities to improve the quality of natural resources on their land,” State Conservationist Eric B. Banks said.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available for agricultural producers. Through EQIP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve water and air quality, and create wildlife habitat.

The November 18 application deadline also applies to the following initiatives:

- **High Tunnel System Initiative**: NRCS will help producers implement high tunnels that extend growing seasons for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner.

- **Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative**: NRCS will assist producers to implement conservation practices specifically targeted to improve the lesser prairie-chicken habitat while promoting the overall health of grazing lands.

- **Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project**: NRCS will assist landowners to establish milkweed and other plants critical to the iconic Monarch Butterfly.

- **Ogallala Aquifer Initiative**: NRCS will assist producers to reduce aquifer water use, improve water quality, and enhance the economic viability of croplands and rangelands.

- **On-Farm Energy Initiative**: Producers work with an NRCS-approved Technical Service Provider to develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an agricultural operation.

- **Organic Initiative**: NRCS will assist producers with installation of conservation practices on agricultural operations related to organic production. Producers currently certified as organic, transitioning to organic, or producers who are exempt based on the National Organic Program will have access to a broad set of conservation practices to assist in treating their resource concerns.

- **National Water Quality Initiative**: Application cutoff date will be established at a later time.

NRCS accepts applications for all of its programs on a continuous basis, but applications must be filed for these programs by November 18 to be eligible for the next round of funding. Producers interested in EQIP should submit a signed application to the local NRCS field office.

EQIP also helps address the unique circumstances of socially disadvantaged, veteran, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers, who have natural resource concerns that need to be addressed on their land,” said Banks. Qualifying Kansas producers compete separately and receive higher payment rates.

For more information visit the Kansas NRCS Web site www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs or your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. To find a service center near you, check on the Internet at offices.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.
Hammeke Farms will be the host of this year’s No-Till Cover Crop Field day to be held on October 27th starting at 4:00 pm. The field is located in Pawnee Co 2 miles north of intersection US Hwy 183 and KS Hwy 156 (Sanford Junction). The plots are located on the west side of intersection US183 and Q Rd.

The day will begin in the field to look at 5 cover crop mixes and 4 monoculture varieties. Producers will have hands on identification as well as be able to ask questions of experts as to their use, plant characteristics, nutrient and grazing values. There will also be a light meal and a presentation from Dr. Anita Dille, KSU Professor of Weed Ecology. She will be speaking on cover crops and weed suppression.

Partial funding is provided by the Rush, Barton and Pawnee Conservation Districts, Golden Belt Residue Management Alliance, Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund. Other sponsors are Sharp Brothers Seed, Star Seed and the USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Cover Crops are an important part of any crop rotation. Deciding how they will fit into your crop rotation is totally up to you. The target is to improve the health of the soil so that it will increase water holding capacities, increase organic matter, increase nutrient cycling, improve compaction issues, provide weed control and reduce runoff. The benefits of no-till farming are economic as well as environmental. Farmers can see an increase in the organic matter of the soil, and a decrease in the amount of erosion. More organic matter and less erosion mean more fertility, less fertilizer, and higher yields. Additionally, with the advances in cover crops and green manures, farmers can greatly reduce some of high-cost herbicides. Cattle producers are also seeing benefits of cover crops by providing late grazing opportunities and giving pastures much needed rest.

All area producers are encouraged to attend this field day and if they are unable to make the meeting, a self-guided tour is set up at the field. Producers planning to attend are encouraged but not required to call one of the conservation districts so we can get a head count for dinner.

Farmers finished with their 2017 wheat planting may contact the FSA Office for an appointment to complete their acreage reports. November 15, 2016 is the final day to report all 2017 alfalfa and grass. December 15, 2016 is final day to report all 2017 small grains such as wheat, oats, barley or triticale.
TOP THREE TIME-SAVING ADVANTAGES USING USDA’S CONSERVATION CLIENT GATEWAY

Salina, Kansas, August 8, 2016—Farmers put in long days. Driving to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office every time paperwork needs to be signed is not always productive. With Conservation Client Gateway, a producer can do most of their business with NRCS online. Farmers using Conservation Client Gateway find these three things to be the most advantageous for them.

Advantage 1—Sign documents electronically. It is a secure way to sign contracts online. Viewing and printing documents at the farmer’s convenience saves time. Plus, everything is logically organized and easy to find. For many farmers that have a long drive to the USDA office, or have multiple projects going on with no time to spare, this feature is a tremendous time saver.

Advantage 2—Keep track of payments. Everyone wants to know when they are getting paid. With Conservation Client Gateway, you can get payment status online without the need for a phone call or waiting for a call back.

Advantage 3—Request conservation practice certification or technical assistance. Submitting certification online speeds up the process—no need for a special trip to the USDA Service Center. And by asking technical questions online, NRCS is better able to reply with more detailed information that can be read online and available to go back to anytime.

“Many farmers in the surrounding states have really appreciated its time-saving features—use is growing in Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, and Texas. Over 1,700 farmers are using this nationwide. We’d like to see Kansas farmers adopt this to help them get more time back in their day,” says Eric B. Banks, Kansas NRCS State Conservationist. We have new initiatives underway to get the word out and show how easy Conservation Client Gateway is to use. Farmers can expect to see more demonstrations at partner events and field demonstrations this year. Saving time, being more productive, and most of all convenience—we hope our farmers and ranchers explore the possibilities with this application.

More information about Conservation Client Gateway can be found online at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/ and clicking on the Conservation Client Gateway banner on the main page. Learn more about NRCS or find your local field office by visiting the Kansas NRCS Web site (www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/). Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

DON’T FORGET!

THE DISTRICT CAN ASSIST WITH:

Tree Plantings:
- Weed Barrier
- Trees and Shrubs
- Deer & Pest Repellent
- Tilling
- Fabric Laying

Rental Equipment:
- No-Till Drills
- Root Plow
- Marking Flags
- Drip Irrigation Supplies
- Grass Seed
HIGH TUNNEL TOUR A SUCCESS

High Tunnels have increased in popularity in the last several years in Barton and Rush Counties. The ability to have an extended growing season for vegetables is the biggest draw for building one on your land. On October 4th, NRCS, Conservation Districts of Barton Pawnee and Rush, as well as K-State Research and Extension held a High Tunnel tour in Barton and Rush Counties.

There were 3 stops on the tour to view high tunnels in our area. Over 50 people attended the tour. The tour began at Coon’s Farm outside of Great Bend at 4 PM. From there the group headed to Heartland Farms outside of Pawnee Rock at 5 PM, and at 6 PM, the tour ended at Swob Farm outside Albert. Each tunnel varied in size, construction and purpose. Whether the participants joined in on all 3 stops or just one they learned about the purposes of high tunnels and how they are being utilized in our communities, how to install their own high tunnel, and opportunities for cost-share for their own project through USDA -NRCS.

The top photo is of the Swob Farm high tunnel back in November of 2015 and the middle photo is of the same high tunnel at full capacity today, a year later. Bottom photo is of the Heartland Farm High Tunnel today.

FREEZER MEAL WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

On October 15, the Women on the Farm committee held a Freezer Meal workshop in Otis. There were 20 participants.

Freezer Cooking is when you cook a bunch of meals at one time to put in your freezer and then pull out as need be. Each participant walked away from the day with 8 meals to put in their freezer. Each meal will serve 5 people with some leftovers. The meals prepared where Honey Rosemary Chicken, Green Chile Pork Tacos, Beef & Creamy Potato Casserole, Chicken Pot Pie, Cheesy Ham & Potatoes, Swiss Steak & Veggies, Breakfast Casserole, and French Breakfast Puffs.

This method of cooking is a great way to save time and money. Because we are buying in much larger quantities, we can stretch the food dollar. By spending a morning as a large group making this happen, it will help free up your evenings to relax or get to a project you have been meaning to do!
What Can I Do?
Be an Earth Team Volunteer

By Jan M. Klaus,
Earth Team Coordinator
NRCS Hays, Kansas

Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a volunteer program called Earth Team that may be just what you are looking for. Kansas NRCS offices are always looking for volunteers to assist with their mission of “Helping People Help the Land.”

During 2013, 2,560 citizens volunteered their time and talents to the Kansas NRCS and the conservation districts. These volunteers donated 19,190 hours. More than a few of these people were first time volunteers and probably thought, “What can I do?” Well, no matter what your talents, interests, age, or physical ability, there is a volunteer opportunity for you. Here are a few examples:

• Schools benefit from conservation tours, exhibits, poster contests, and festivals. Volunteers are needed to help organize events, conduct classes, take pictures, cook food, write news articles, and chaperon students. And lastly, one of the most appreciated jobs a volunteer can do is support staff and save them time and steps.

• Town and community groups benefit from educational meetings and publications. Volunteers are needed to present programs and speak about conservation issues. Volunteers with a history in writing can produce publications and artwork.

• Field office support is needed. This can include opportunities assisting with monthly newsletters, judging poster and essay contests, phone and office support when staff is not available, and lastly, clerical assistance to help organize and file.

• Working in the outdoors presents many other opportunities for volunteers. Outdoor activities include assisting the professional staff as they work directly with farmers and ranchers. Volunteers can take notes and assist with survey equipment, take natural resource inventories, and assist in improving wildlife habitats. It is important to preserve habitat for pheasant, quail, prairie chicken, and many other native wildlife species that inhabit farms and ranches.

• Other outdoor activities that need volunteer assistance are the planning of community beautification and projects for water quality and erosion control.

Volunteers are greatly appreciated and can be the essential link in developing programs which benefit their own community.

Volunteers are needed and appreciated. If you would like to join other Kansas residents who already donate their time to conserve and protect our natural resources, visit your local NRCS office or conservation district office to learn more about being an Earth Team volunteer. The office is located at your local USDA Service Center (listed in the telephone book under United States Government or on the internet at offices.usda.gov). More information is also available on the Kansas Web site at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov. Follow us on Twitter @NRCS_Kansas. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Columbus Day—October 10, 2016—Holiday—Office Closed.
District Board Meeting—October 12, 2016—8:00 PM—USDA Service Center, LaCrosse, KS
Cover Crop Field Day—October 27, 2016—4 PM—Hammeke Farms, Pawnee Co.
Retirement Reception for Paula Sramek—October 28, 2016—1 PM
District Board Meeting—November 2, 2016—7:30 PM—USDA Service Center, LaCrosse, KS
District Board Meeting—December 7, 2016—7:30 PM—USDA Service Center, LaCrosse, KS

The Rush County Conservation District appreciates our newsletter sponsors.
Please thank these sponsors when you see them.

Please make sure the USDA Service Center has your email address and cell phone number. The district has begun submitting our quarterly newsletter by email and FSA is no longer able to mail reminder letters, they need to call or email.
Set Reminders on Your Phones

Cover Crop Plot Field Day
Thursday, October 27
4 PM
Hammeke Farms—See article inside for address & details

Retirement Reception for Paula Sramek
Friday, October 28 ~ ~ 1 to 4 PM

First EQIP Cut-Off Date ~ ~ November 18th
See article inside for details.

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