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## Happy Holidays!



Photo by Alexis Clark, Lecompton

*The Ranchland Trust of Kansas board and staff wish you a Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy New Year!*

## Congratulations, Hoeme Family Farm and Ranch in Scott City, winners of the 2018 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award!



Front row (left to right): Stacy, Kyle (holding Asher), Sophia, Chaston, Griffin (behind sign), and Josh.  
Back row (left to right): Karissa, Rachael, Sarah and Shanaya.  
Not pictured are Stacy's brother, Kelly, his wife Mitzi and daughters Alexis and Brooke, a business partner in Hoeme Family Farm and Ranch.

## Hoeme Family Receives 2018 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award

News Release Provided by Sand County Foundation

Hoeme Family Farm and Ranch of Scott City has been selected as the recipient of the 2018 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award.

Sand County Foundation, the nation's leading voice for private conservation, created the Leopold Conservation Award to inspire American landowners by recognizing exceptional farmers, ranchers and foresters. The prestigious award, named in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, is given in 14 states.

In Kansas the \$10,000 award is presented annually by Sand County Foundation, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, and Ranchland Trust of Kansas.

For more than 40 years the Hoeme family has been on the cutting edge of conservation practices that help their farm's profitability, soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat. Stacy Hoeme and his son, Chaston, farm about 9,000 acres along the Smoky Hill River, and another 10,000 acres in Scott County.

Hoeme Family Farm and Ranch was revealed as this year's recipient at the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts' Annual Convention in Wichita on November 19. The Hoeme family was presented with a \$10,000 award and a crystal depicting Aldo Leopold.

For decades the Hoemes have used limited tillage and crop rotation to promote soil health and manage water usage. Their land ethic involves strategies that far exceed those suggested by state and federal conservation programs.

The Hoemes developed a cattle grazing program that recognizes that prairies require grazing and rest periods to maintain their natural productivity. The diverse collection of plants on their

pastures supports some of the largest known populations and densities of the lesser prairie chicken.

Their land was the focal point of the largest study ever conducted on lesser prairie chickens. It was just one way the family has been supportive of research on this wildlife species.

The Hoemes also participated in a large research project that sought to learn why the mule deer was in long-term decline. Separately, when biologists from the Brule Sioux Reservation in South Dakota wanted to re-establish swift foxes on tribal lands, they captured, transported and released about 12 swift foxes from the Hoemes' land.



Chaston (left) and Stacy Hoeme, pictured with RTK Project Coordinator Stephanie Manes

The many insights gained on their land have influenced how government, conservation partners, and other landowners manage the landscape for wildlife.

The Hoemes were among western Kansas' first ranches to fence off ponds to protect water quality and use solar power to pump water for their livestock.

They manage many food plots for deer, pheasants, bobwhite quail and migrating song birds. In times of deep snow, the grain left standing may be their only easily accessed food for miles.

A frequent host for a variety of educational tours, the Hoemes have also stepped into political activism for agriculture and wildlife. An additional act of dedication to preserving the fragile, prairie environment found in Kansas is the family's ongoing plan to place their ranch in a conservation easement.

Such efforts are the reasons why Stacy has twice been honored as Conservationist of the Year by the Kansas Wildlife Federation. His land ethic is undeniable. Thousands of acres of perfect prairie as designed by Mother Nature exist due to decades of diligence by the Hoeme family.

"RTK appreciates the vast conservation work the Hoeme family has done and continues to do," said Cade Rensink, Ranchland Trust of Kansas Board Chair. "We are very excited to be a partner in the annual recognition of top natural resource stewards in Kansas."

Among the many outstanding Kansas landowners nominated for the award were finalists Alexander Ranch in Sun City and Z Bar Ranch in Lake City.

The Leopold Conservation Award in Kansas is made possible thanks to the generous contributions from Ducks Unlimited, ITC Great Plains, Westar Energy, Clean Line Energy Partners, Kansas Forest Service, Kansas Department of Agriculture (Division of Conservation), Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, The Nature Conservancy, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.



OUR MISSION

To preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes.

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RTK Feature Story: Choosing Kansas

By Chelsea Good, RTK Board Member

I'm a Kansan by choice. After graduating from Kansas State University, my parents moved to Colorado. I was born and raised in Parker, a booming suburban community outside of Denver.

Growing up, my home county, Douglas, was the fastest-growing county in the nation. For many, the ability to have a large home with a yard just a 30-minute commute from Denver was a dream. To me, the cookie-cutter suburbs were lifeless and dull.

I much preferred our small acreage outside of town, complete with a barn full of my show cattle, sheep, and hogs. I loved visiting family in Kansas and jumped at the opportunity to move there myself to judge livestock for Butler Community College in El Dorado. My judging team and I spent hours upon hours in judging vans visiting producers across the state. These men and women welcomed us on their ranches to hone our evaluation skills on their stock. Often times, they'd tell us about their family heritage while we were there. The history of this land is entrenched in people who are eager to share their love for it. This passion lit a fire in me as well.

While in school at Butler, road trips to Manhattan were a weekly occurrence. It was on such a trek on Highway 77 that I caught sight of my first pasture burn. I wanted to call the fire department!

Luckily, I was instead given a lesson on the merits and intentional nature of pasture burning by a native Kansan.

Many years later, I never lose the sense of awe that comes with driving through the Flint Hills as they burn. I love the excitement and hope of the fresh green grass that results and the cattle that graze it.

Every time I go back to Douglas County, Colorado, the roads are a bit more crowded and the landscape dotted with more cookie-cutter developments where open space used to be. There is less working land and virtually no appreciation for it.

For me, the importance of livestock production, the land that supports it, and the people who live it are driving factors for my love of Kansas.

As an attorney and big believer in landowner rights, I see voluntary conservation easements as an exciting and effective tool to preserve working ranch landscapes. They provide private property owners with the opportunity to make a decision that will ensure the legacy of the land for generations to come while also being able to continue to use that land for agriculture endeavors.

My life narrative might be a bit different than many who are committed to preserving our Kansas working land, but my love of the land is pure. I've seen what urban sprawl can do, and don't want to see it push out the important industry and history of ranching in the state I now call home.



Photo by Tom Gross

Tanja Harrison Joins RTK Board of Directors

Tanja Harrison will join the 2019 Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) Board of Directors. Tanja and her husband, Kelly, have been loyal supporters of RTK for 10 years. Tanja has served on the RTK events committee for two years and development committee for one year.

Tanja grew up on a farm near Ulysses where her family operated a 3,000 acre farm, raising cattle and wheat.

Tanja went to WSU and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Fitness and also went to Newman University to receive a degree in elementary education.

Please help us welcome Tanja in 2019!



How Can You Help Make a Difference in Land Conservation?

By Cade Rensink, RTK Board Chairman

This year the Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) celebrates 15 years. I want to say thank you for all you have done to get RTK to where it is today. Support from people like you has made it possible for us to achieve a number of goals since 2003.

We are not planning to rest on our laurels, though. The board has established a new set of strategic objectives and organizational priorities to pursue. I am hopeful you will continue to travel with us down this path of continued progress.

As we talk about progress, I want to give you something to consider. In the summer of 2010, the Moyer Ranch near Junction City, Kansas, granted a permanent conservation easement to the Kansas Land Trust. At the dedication ceremony, the late ranch manager and celebrated cowboy poet, Trey Allen, explained how he loved the idea that generations from now, the grandchildren of children today will have an opportunity to see the land the way it has always been. To conclude the day, those present were treated to a poem he had penned about his thoughts and emotions regarding the land and the march of time.

Perhaps you knew Trey and his ability to convey messages by being a self-proclaimed "Humorist, Surveyor of Kingdoms, and Practitioner of Quality, Truth and Improvement." I wasn't fortunate enough to know him well, but believe his "title" to be accurate. So much so, in fact, that even to this day, I still use the profound closing line of his dedication poem as the quote in my email signature.

"Progress may just best be measured by the things we leave alone." - Trey Allen

Take a moment to stop and think about that. How is it, exactly, that we are measuring progress? If you agree with Trey, we should be gauging our successes, both individually and socially, on our ability to grow without compromising the things that matter most.

I have had the opportunity to reflect on what this means for RTK. I truly believe the work done over the last year will serve as the foundation to measure successes going forward. Through a strategic planning process, RTK has clearly identified what matters most to us: fiscal responsibility, a commitment to conservation, our ranching heritage, a respect for private land ownership, collaboration with others that share our values, and professional integrity.

As we progress in the preservation of Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes, those core values will drive our commitment and guide our planning and initiatives as an organization. Your financial support will ensure that RTK has the infrastructure necessary to achieve this mission. In this critical year for the future of RTK, we truly need your support. No gift is too small to make a difference in land conservation!

Kansas ranch land, in many areas of the state, continues to come under pressure for conversion to residential and commercial development. Maintaining open spaces and practicing sound stewardship is vital to the health of the environment. Your financial support makes a direct contribution to both as you help carry out conservation projects that benefit the sustainability of working agricultural lands, the natural resources they provide, and the landowners that care for them. Please consider a gift of \$100 or more this year to accelerate the pace of conservation work in Kansas.

Together, we can preserve working landscapes that provide open spaces, an ecologically diverse community, a lasting legacy of the families that have operated them and a special quality of life for us all.

As you consider donating again this year, like Trey, take some time to jot down your thoughts and emotions regarding the land and the march of time. How will you measure progress? What is it that you want left alone?

Yes, I would like to support the Ranchland Trust of Kansas!

My gift is enclosed:

☐ \$100-\$249 Friend

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