

INSIDE this issue

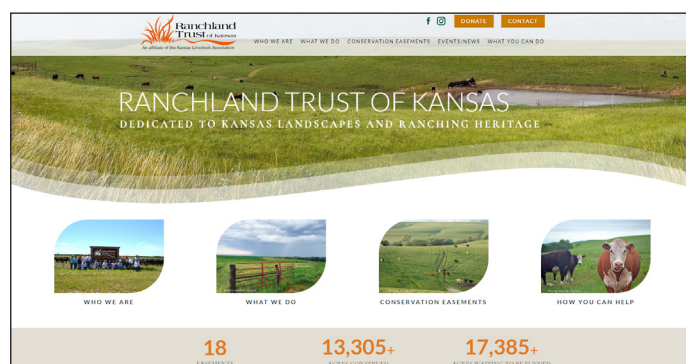
- Alexander Receives Kansas Leopold Conservation Award **2**
What Does the Kansas Landscape Mean to You? **3**

Photo Contest Stationery Cards



The 2019 RTK Photo Contest stationery cards are for sale at \$20 per 10 card set. These beautiful cards feature 10 winning photos. All photos were taken in Kansas. Printed on premium cardstock, the cards are blank inside and come with white envelopes. To order, visit www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org or contact samantha@kla.org.

NEW WEBSITE!



RTK launched a new website in November 2019. Users can view myths and facts about conservation easements and access the initial landowner application. Visit the RTK News and Events page for upcoming events, Leopold Conservation Award winners and videos, past newsletters and RTK photo contest winning photos. Planned giving options also are available on the new website.

We encourage everyone to learn more about conserving Kansas. Contact RTK today at (785) 273-5115, rtk@kla.org or find us on Facebook or Instagram!

RTK Receives First Acres for America Grant in State History

By Scarlett Hagins, KLA Vice President of Communications

The Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) recently was awarded the first ever Acres for America grant in Kansas by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Walmart. The \$650,000 grant will be used to conserve the Ballet Ranch located in the Red Hills of Kansas.

“From its large working prairie to its rare caves, this property is a wonderful fit for Walmart’s Acres for America Program,” said Todd Hogrefe, director of the NFWF Central Regional Office. “During my visit to the property last summer, I had the opportunity to appreciate these habitats firsthand, but I was equally impressed by the strong land stewardship ethic I observed from the partners. I was truly inspired by their shared commitment to preserving this remarkable property.”

RTK will partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWP); The Nature Conservancy; and the Miller family, owners of the ranch, to place a perpetual conservation easement on more than 9,000 acres of grasslands. The project will ensure suitable habi-

tat for sensitive and declining wildlife species, including the long-nose snake, cave-dwelling bats, lesser prairie chicken and numerous grassland-obligated birds, while maintaining the viability of a fourth-generation working cattle ranch. It also will help sustain native mixed-grass prairie, streams and riparian areas throughout the property, thus preserving the open space and scenic landscape of the Ballet Ranch.



Photo by Greg Kramos

“Aside from the funding provided, NFWF’s confidence in RTK to lead this distinguished project means a great deal to our organization. As a small land trust, this project will increase RTK’s conservation efforts by 73%,” said RTK Executive Director Lynn Gentine.

The Ballet Ranch adds to the conservation scale and value of the adjacent

Z-Bar Ranch, which consists of more than 40,000 acres. Together, these conservation investments of more than 50,000 acres represent an upwelling of recognition and regional support.

Unlike many neighboring states, Kansas is without a designated state conservation fund. For two decades, the state lost nearly three acres of agricultural land an hour to development. Therefore, collaborations such as this, that bring together state and private entities, make conservation possible in Kansas. KDWP and NRCS are two partners that played a key role in making the Ballet Ranch project possible.

“NRCS is looking forward to continuing our partnership with RTK and other Kansas partners with similar missions,” said NRCS State Conservationist Karen Woodrich. “This project could lead to another successful application to help protect this property with a conservation easement through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). ACEP provides eligible entities and landowners the opportunity to protect working farms and ranches so the property remains in agriculture production.”

Alexander Receives Kansas Leopold Conservation Award

News Release Provided by Sand County Foundation

Ted Alexander of Sun City has been selected as the recipient of the 2019 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the award recognizes those who inspire others with their dedication to land, water and wildlife resources in their care.

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

“Ted has been a leader in using innovative grazing sys-

tems to manage his rangeland and has willingly shared his knowledge and experiences with others. The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is proud that this long-time conservation district supervisor is being recognized for his stewardship as the recipient of the 2019 Leopold Conservation Award,” said Dan Meyerhoff, KACD Executive Director.

Ted Alexander took over the Skinner Family Ranch in 1984. The young rancher was challenged with making a business out of overgrazed land covered with invasive eastern red cedar trees.

continued on page 2

OUR MISSION

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

6031 SW 37th St.
Topeka, KS 66614
(785) 273-5115

www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cade Rensink
Chair of the Board
Minneapolis, KS

Chelsea Good
Vice Chair of the Board
Leawood, KS

Kim Harms
Secretary/Treasurer
Lincolnville

Carrie Allison
Eureka, KS

Ryan Arndt
Emporia, KS

Mike Collinge
Hamilton, KS

Tim Connell
El Dorado, KS

Barth Crouch
Salina, KS

Bill Eastman
Topeka, KS

Tanja Harrison
Lawrence, KS

Jason Newell
Topeka, KS

STAFF

Lynn Gentine
Executive Director
lynn@kla.org

Samantha Weishaar
Associate Director
samantha@kla.org

Stephanie Manes
Conservation Easement Coordinator
stephanie@kla.org



- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship

continued from page 1

His goal of maximizing production and maintaining economic viability while existing harmoniously with nature would guide him in making the ranch environmentally and economically sustainable.

Beef cattle were raised with a rotational grazing system and new piping delivered their drinking water. Thousands of acres of cedars were cut or burned. Such ideas were not widely embraced at the time, yet his vision for the landscape not only took root, it flourished.

Rotational grazing allowed him to increase the size of his herd, while bolstering the sandy soil's ability to handle what Mother Nature threw at it. Fewer cedar trees meant less competition for water and sunlight, which stimulated the growth of desirable forages and improved water quality in creeks. With an improved water cycle, springs and intermittent streams that had been dry for decades began to flow again.

"Ted is an exemplary conservationist of the grassland ecosystem: plants, animals, soil, insects and humans. He's always been big-picture-minded and had a passion for collaborating with others," said Cade Rensink, RTK Chairman.

After attending a ranch management course, Ted developed and implemented one of the first written drought plans for a Kansas ranch. Today, his management style continues to evolve with his son, Brian. They've embraced conservation practices that help the ranch's profitability, soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat.

"Leopold Conservation Award recipients are at the forefront of a movement by America's farmers and ranchers to simultaneously achieve economic and envi-

ronmental success," said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer.

Nearly half of all known reptile and amphibian species in Kansas are found on the ranch, including the threatened red spotted toad. Rare species from pallid bats and Arkansas darters to lesser prairie-chickens have all made a comeback on the ranch. Ecology diversity is thriving as well. Researchers have documented more than 160 plants on Alexander Ranch (compared to an average of 100 or less on other area ranches). Alexander Ranch has displayed resiliency since being scorched by a 2016 wildfire that burned 450,000 acres in Barber County.

Ted mentors university students and young ranchers, and was a founding member of the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition and Kansas Prescribed Fire Council. He was instrumental in forming the rancher-led, Comanche

Pool Prairie Resource Foundation, dedicated to the improvement of native prairies while maintaining the economic viability of ranches in the Red Hills. He received the National Private Lands Stewardship Award from

the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 2011.

"Ted practices simple, innovative, and ethical methods of range management, and he considers it a personal responsibility to bring awareness of this philosophy to a broader audience," said Christopher Sheil, a biology professor who brings his students to Alexander Ranch.

It is for his outreach efforts while successfully balancing the needs of the soil, water, livestock and wildlife in his care that he received the Leopold Conservation Award. 🌿



Ted Alexander



Brian Alexander

What Does the Kansas Landscape Mean to You?

Picture for a moment the beautiful Kansas landscape. What do you see? Tradition, the value of hard work, or maybe a family legacy? Others may see threatened native prairies, wildlife habitat or clean air and water.

Now, picture less. Less grassland, less habitat, fewer ranchers. What a disappointment that would be for Kansas' future!

Only with support from **you** can RTK continue to be the only agricultural land trust in Kansas striving to protect productive land and a proud ranching heritage.

For two decades, Kansas lost three acres an hour to development. Economic and urban development have a welcome place in Kansas, but **you** can help ensure the Kansas ranching heritage will always have its place, too. Thank you for joining the RTK herd and being the driver behind Kansas conservation. 🌿



Your gift of \$250 will assist RTK in conserving approximately 12 acres of Kansas grasslands.
Visit www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org to contribute today!

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

☐ My one-time gift is enclosed

☐ My annual pledge is enclosed (We will bill you each November unless you request otherwise.)

Annual pledge signature: _____

☐ \$100-\$249 Friend ☐ \$250-\$499 Advocate ☐ \$500-\$999 Steward ☐ \$1,000+ Patron ☐ Other

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Payment: ☐ Check enclosed ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Security Code: _____

☐ My company will match my gift: Company Name: _____

☐ Please contact me. I have other thoughts to share.

Return this form with your contribution to: Ranchland Trust of Kansas • 6031 SW 37th Street • Topeka, KS 66614

To donate online, visit our website: www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org

The Ranchland Trust of Kansas is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization. A contribution to RTK is a tax-deductible, charitable contribution.