



NEWS RELEASE

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Ranchland Trust of Kansas Capacity Award Turns Focus Westward

Written by: Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) was recently awarded \$100,000 from Playa Lakes Joint Venture's (PLJV) ConocoPhillips Capacity Grant program to support the launch of a four-year project that will enhance, increase and protect grassland habitat in western Kansas through conservation easements.

"RTK is a good fit because we are an agricultural land trust, so we're able to use our industry-specific connections to converse with and educate the public on the great need for conservation easements on agricultural landscapes. We are grateful for this opportunity," said Lynn Gentine, RTK Executive Director.

Since 2002, PLJV has awarded capacity grants to organizations that are at a point where a multi-year investment can help them develop the ability to deliver long-term grassland habitat conservation.

"We are honored to be supporting RTK's work of protecting working lands and supporting people while helping PLJV with our mission of wildlife conservation. It is win-win all the way around," said Mike Carter, Playa Lakes Joint Venture Coordinator.

RTK's role will be to build new relationships with ranchers and farmers in the western part of the state. The goal is to grow relationships and initiate dialogue between landowners and conservation partners. The first year will be a discovery phase. Forums will be scheduled to introduce conservation easement facts to regional landowners.

"There are a lot of myths about conservation easements. They are good for some ranchers, but they are not for everybody. It is a very personal decision and often landowners are interested in learning more about the process," said Gentine.

During year two, RTK and partners will identify priority areas and begin accepting applications. In years three and four, RTK will process the applications for completing conservation easements.



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“Conserving these important grasslands in western Kansas is important to the wildlife and migrating birds. The grasslands are an avenue to protect not only the habitat of Kansas, but also our neighboring states’ migratory birds,” said Gentine.

This project will grow long-term project capacity and will help transition RTK from a regional to a statewide land trust. This work will take RTK to the next level of conservation and expand the footprint of conservation easements.

Gentine said, “Good ranchers and good farmers are inherently excellent conservationists. For many of the ranchers, it’s important that the land continues to be used for agriculture. The grassland is the mechanism to focus on the priorities of the rancher and the wildlife habitat.”

RTK is an agricultural land trust affiliate of the Kansas Livestock Association, with a mission to preserve Kansas’ ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes.

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