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During this time we ask that our supporters please check RTK's website for up-to-date information regarding RTK events:  
[www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org/events-news/](http://www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org/events-news/)

Contact RTK today at  
(785) 273-5115, [rtk@kla.org](mailto:rtk@kla.org)  
or find us on Facebook or Instagram!



# POSTPONED

## The Cowboys for Conservation Trail Ride in Eureka on May 2 has been postponed until further notice.

Thank you!  
Ranchland Trust of Kansas  
Allison Land & Cattle

Photo by Lily Judd

## RTK Capacity Award Turns Focus Westward

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 sched-



Photo by Jeff Ridder taken in Logan County

uled 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.

"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."

## Conservation Cattle

By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

*The following article was featured in the center spread of the Spring issue of Saving Land, a national publication by Land Trust Alliance.*

Kansas, located in the Great Plains, is home to the largest continuous area of tallgrass prairie left in the world.

Hundreds of years ago, nearly 30 million bison grazed and roamed the prairies of the Great Plains. By feeding on prairie grass, bison were an important part and steward of the biodiversity of the plains. Fast forward to present day and now cattle have largely replaced bison as the environmental stewards of today.

Over time, 96% of the tallgrass prairie has been lost to development. Today most of the remaining 4% is in Kansas, and cattle are key to the sustainability of the prairie. Grazing provides control of erosion, habitat restoration for threatened and endangered species, bird migration habitat, improved vegetation along stream banks, watershed health and scenic landscapes. Livestock grazing also is a tool to lower wildfire risk by controlling the height and distribution of forage that fuels fire.

Working with voluntary ranchers and conservation partners to create conservation easements, the

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## OUR MISSION

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

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- Sound Finances
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# Jason Newell Joins RTK Board of Directors

By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

Jason Newell is a Kansas native and graduate of Kansas State University. He is currently the Branch Manager, Senior Vice President/Investments at Stifel Nicolaus. He decided to serve on the board of Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) because of his interest in ranching and conservation.

"The thing I like most about RTK is their goal of preserving native grassland in Kansas," Newell said.

He and his family also appreciate RTK's mission that includes family heritage and the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Newell said, "As a fifth-generation Kansan, I would like to help younger generations enjoy the experiences and beauty that I have in the Flint Hills."

Born and raised in Topeka, he also experienced life on his family ranch located in Wabaunsee County. His year-

round hobby is working on the ranch.

"My favorite thing to do relating to conservation is burning our pastures in the spring and cutting down cedar trees all year long," Newell said.

He also enjoys hunting, fishing and traveling with his family. He and his wife Erika have been married for 25 years. Together they have three children, Payton, Chase and Olivia.

In addition to serving on the RTK Board of Directors, Newell has many other leadership roles. He has served as past president of the TARC foundation, past president of Active 20-30 Club Topeka, past finance chairman of Stormont Vail

Foundation, founding board member of the Kansas Children's Discovery Center, member of the Kansas Livestock Association and lifetime sponsor of Ducks Unlimited.



Jason Newell

## RTK Recipient of Generous Award

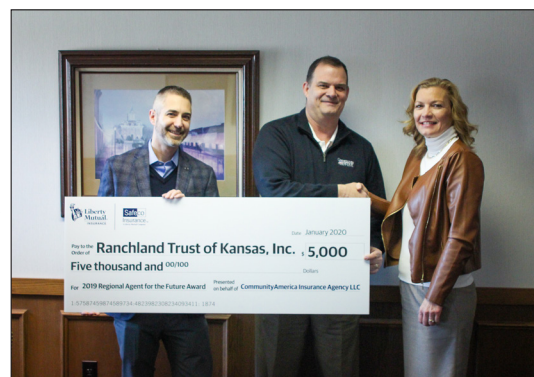
By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) recently was awarded a \$5,000 donation on behalf of the Community-America Insurance Agency, which services Kansas and Missouri. The agency was selected as a recipient of the 2019 Regional Agent for the Future Award by Liberty Mutual Insurance and Safeco Insurance. As part of the award, winners get to choose a non-profit organization to receive a donation on their behalf.

"We are honored to be recognized with the Agent for the Future Award from Liberty Mutual and Safeco Insurance. Their generosity allows us to support Ranchland Trust of Kansas in their mission to preserve Kansas' heritage

and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes," said Community-America Insurance Agency President Scott Strickland.

The Agent for the Future Award recognizes independent agencies that are adapting to meet the changing needs of customers and driving the independent agent channel forward. CommunityAmerica Insurance Agency was recognized for their commitment to innovation, growth, advancement and delivering financial peace of mind to the members of Community-America Credit Union.



Safeco Insurance Senior Territory Manager Josh Nordin (left), CommunityAmerica Insurance Agency President Scott Strickland and RTK Executive Director Lynn Gentine

# Kansas Leopold Award Seeks Nominees

News Release Provided by Sand County Foundation

Sand County Foundation presents the Leopold Conservation Award to private landowners in 20 states for extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. In Kansas, the \$10,000 award is presented annually by Sand County Foundation, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD), and Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK).

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the award recognizes those who inspire others with their dedication to land, water and wildlife habitat management on private, working land. In his influential 1949 book, "A Sand County Almanac," Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage.

Nominations may be submitted on behalf of a landowner, or landowners may nominate themselves. Applications are reviewed by an independent panel of agricultural and conservation leaders.

The application deadline is June 1, 2020. Applications can be emailed to [award@sandcountyfoundation.org](mailto:award@sandcountyfoundation.org). If mailed, applications must be postmarked by June 1, and mailed to: KACD, c/o Dan Meyerhoff, 414 Autumn Lane, Hays, KS 67601.

"The Leopold Conservation Award Program provides a valuable opportunity to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Kansas agricultural landowners who are committed to strong conservation practices and effective stewardship," said Dan Meyerhoff, Executive Director of KACD.

"RTK is a proud supporter of the Leopold Conservation Award in Kansas. It is an honor to help recognize those conservationists who go above and beyond in the stewardship of our natural resources," said Cade Ren-



sink, Chair of the Board of Ranchland Trust of Kansas.

"Conserving our state's rich and diverse natural resources is ingrained deeply in the culture of our multi-generational farms and ranches," said Kansas Agriculture Secretary Mike Beam. "The Leopold Conservation Award serves an important role of reminding the general public of how private land managers conserve and enhance these resources for future generations."

"Leopold Conservation Award recipients are at the forefront of a movement by America's farmers and ranchers to simultaneously achieve economic and environmental success," said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer.

The award will be presented in November at the KACD Annual Convention in Wichita.

The 2019 recipient of the award was Ted Alexander of Sun City. The first Kansas Leopold Conservation Award was presented in 2015 to Sproul Ranch of Sedan.

The Leopold Conservation Award Program in Kansas is made possible thanks to the generous support of Kansas Association of Conservation Districts; Ranchland Trust of Kansas; Sand County Foundation; Ducks Unlimited; Everygy; The Farm Credit Associations of Kansas; ITC Great Plains; Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Conservation; Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism; Kansas Forest Service; McDonald's; The Nature Conservancy in Kansas and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more information on the award, visit [www.leopoldconservationaward.org](http://www.leopoldconservationaward.org).

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accredited Ranchland Trust of Kansas forms partnerships that help not only the environment, wildlife and ecosystems of Kansas, but aid land stewards in achieving successful financial goals for their operations and families. These ranchers are inherently exceptional land stewards and conservationists. Together, ranchers and cattle sustain these important grasslands and ensure they thrive for future generations.

To learn more and view beautiful photographs of the Kansas landscape, please visit the Ranchland Trust of Kansas website at [www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org](http://www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org).

