

August 11, 2021

MEDIA CONTACT:

Casey Langan, Sand County Foundation
608.663.4605 ext. 32, clangan@sandcountyfoundation.org

Photos available at [Website link](#)

Finalists Selected for 2021 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award

Four finalists have been selected for the 2021 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award®.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the prestigious award recognizes landowners 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](#), [American Farmland Trust](#), [Kansas Association of Conservation Districts](#) and the [Ranchland Trust of Kansas](#).

The finalists are:

- **Vance and Louise Ehmke of Healy.** The Ehmkes remain profitable while conserving soil and water, by experimenting with crops like triticale. This cross between wheat and rye is popular as cattle feed and produces enough crop residue to protect fields from soil erosion. With more than 50 playas on their land, the Ehmkes are involved in research, education and outreach on playas' contribution to recharging the Ogallala aquifer. They also have hundreds of acres for migratory bird and pollinator habitat.
- **Ray and Susan Flickner of Wichita.** The Flickner family farms in McPherson, Hodgeman, Dickinson and Norton counties. They installed sub-surface drip irrigation technology to become more efficient with water and nutrient applications on crops. They experiment with cover crops to improve water infiltration and suppress weeds. Their Flickner Innovation Farm is a collaboration of more than a dozen university, industry and agency partners where new methods to improve soil health and conserve water are demonstrated.
- **Dwane Roth of Manhattan.** Roth owns Big D Farms in Finney County. He uses cover crops to build soil health and combat wind erosion on sandy soils. As one of Kansas' first Water Technology Farmers, he is passionate about addressing declining water levels and extending the life of the Ogallala aquifer. His participation involves researching and testing new irrigation strategies and technologies that maintain crop production while reducing water usage.
- **Glenn and Barbara Walker of Brookville.** The Walkers are improving soil health, wildlife habitat and water distribution on their properties in Ellsworth, Lincoln, Rice, Russell and

Saline counties. By using rotational grazing to feed their beef cattle, they are also managing grassland to improve habitat for greater prairie chickens, turkeys and deer. Their investment in removing invasive red cedar trees improves water resources. Several of their properties are enrolled in the Kansas Walk-in Hunting program.

The Kansas Leopold Conservation Award will be presented at the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts' 77th Annual Convention in Wichita in November. The award recipient will receive \$10,000 and a crystal award.

“Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is excited to recognize these outstanding landowners who are committed to conservation on their land,” said Dan Meyerhoff, KACD Executive Director. “We are proud to partner with Sand County Foundation and the Ranchland Trust of Kansas to give these families the recognition they deserve.”

“The Ranchland Trust of Kansas congratulates the finalists for the Leopold Conservation Award. RTK is proud to be a supporter of this award showcasing and celebrating the achievements of landowners who invest and succeed in conservation efforts of private lands,” said Chelsea Good, Ranchland Trust of Kansas Vice Chairman.

“Recipients of this award are real life examples of conservation-minded agriculture,” said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer. “These hard-working families are essential to our environment, food system and rural economy.”

“As the national sponsor for Sand County Foundation’s Leopold Conservation Award, American Farmland Trust, celebrates the hard work and dedication of the Kansas award finalists,” said John Piotti, AFT president and CEO. “At AFT we believe that conservation in agriculture requires a focus on the land, the practices and the people and this award recognizes the integral role of all three.”

The first Kansas Leopold Conservation Award recipient was named in 2015. The 2020 recipient was Flying W Ranch (Josh and Gwen Hoy) of Cedar Point.

The Leopold Conservation Award in Kansas is made possible thanks to the generous support of American Farmland Trust, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, Ranchland Trust of Kansas, Sand County Foundation, Farm Credit Associations of Kansas, ITC Great Plains, Evergy, Kansas Department of Agriculture (Division of Conservation), Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism; Kansas Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service of Kansas, McDonald’s, The Nature Conservancy, and a Kansas Leopold Conservation Award recipient.

In his influential 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage, which he called “an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity.”

Sand County Foundation presents the Leopold Conservation Award to private landowners in 23 states for extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. For more information, visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org.

###

LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD PROGRAM

The Leopold Conservation Award is a competitive award that recognizes landowner achievement in voluntary conservation. Sand County Foundation presents the award in California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and in New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont).

www.leopoldconservationaward.org

SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation inspires and empowers a growing number of private landowners to ethically manage natural resources in their care, so future generations have clean and abundant water, healthy soil to support agriculture and forestry, plentiful habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation. www.sandcountyfoundation.org

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

American Farmland Trust is the only national organization that takes a holistic approach to agriculture, focusing on the land itself, the agricultural practices used on that land, and the farmers and ranchers who do the work. AFT launched the conservation agriculture movement and continues to raise public awareness through its No Farms, No Food message. Since its founding in 1980, AFT has helped permanently protect over 6.5 million acres of agricultural lands, advanced environmentally sound farming practices on millions of additional acres, and supported thousands of farm families. www.farmland.org

KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit, incorporated organization composed of members from the conservation districts located throughout Kansas' 105 counties. Through partnerships with federal, state, and local entities, the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts has brought together groups that share the common goal of wise and efficient conservation practices that protect Kansas' natural resources. The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts promotes and supports the establishment of programs dedicated to conservation and the organized development of Kansas land, water and related resources. www.kacdnet.org

RANCHLAND TRUST OF KANSAS

The Ranchland Trust of Kansas is a private, non-profit organization founded by members of the Kansas Livestock Association in 2003. The organization was created to provide assistance to

ranchers and landowners who desire to conserve their land with conservation easements. Guided by their mission to preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes, the Ranchland Trust of Kansas values a commitment to conservation, respect for private landownership, integrity, organizational excellence and collaboration with those who share their values. The Ranchland Trust of Kansas remains an affiliate of the Kansas Livestock Association. www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org