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## Visit our booth at the KLA Trade Show!

*Ranchland Trust of Kansas is now accepting donations of silent auction items to benefit RTK at the annual KLA Convention.*



## Kansas Leopold Conservation Award Finalists

*News release provided by Sand County Foundation*

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 (KACD) and the Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK).

The finalists are Vance and Louise Ehmke of Healy, Ray and Susan Flickner of Wichita, Dwane Roth of Manhattan and Glenn and Barbara Walker of Brookville.

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.

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 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

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 KACD Convention in Wichita in November.

"KACD 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 RTK to give these families the recognition they deserve."

"RTK congratulates the finalists for the Leopold Conservation Award. We are 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, Chair of the RTK Board.

"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."

Visit [leopoldconservationaward.org](http://leopoldconservationaward.org) for more information.



the Ogallala aquifer. His participation involves researching and testing new irrigation strategies and technologies that maintain crop production while reducing water usage.

The Walkers are improving soil health, wildlife habitat and water distribution on their properties in



## OUR MISSION

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

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# "I'm Still Confused. How Does a Conservation Easement Work?" Let's Break It Down.

By Lynn Gentine, RTK Executive Director

If you ever have listened to someone explain what a conservation easement is and how it works, and then thought to yourself, "I have absolutely no idea what you just said," you're not alone.

Easements are complicated and never a one-size-fits-all experience. But rarely do good things come easily.

Here is an elevator-speech introduction. A conservation easement is when a landowner extinguishes development rights they don't need for their agricultural operations. Landowners voluntarily do this for many reasons. They may want to ensure the grassland is never plowed, or that it never becomes a subdivision, or they simply want to utilize the compensation for operations or to help a family member start their agricultural legacy. The landowner continues to own the land and typically do their daily ag operations as they did before. They can sell the property or pass it down. They can do whatever they wish with the compensation. The restrictions on developing or converting the grassland remain attached to the deed as it is transferred to the next owner. RTK does not own any portion of the land.

So, how does the compensation work? First, the value of the property to be considered has an initial appraisal. Then, there is a second appraisal as if the development restrictions were put in place. The landowner is compensated for the difference between the two appraisals. Depending on the funder for this compensation and their

conservation objectives, the goals and the funding format can be very different. No wonder it can get really confusing.

It takes time, too...a lot of it. Patience is a conservation virtue. If a landowner chooses to donate the easement and seek a multi-year tax deduction, it can take many months to complete the process. If the owner seeks monetary compensation, it can take a couple of years to compete for an available grant. However, those grants are out there and waiting to be accessed.

A landowner is not obligated to the easement until the very last day, when the easement transaction closes. The landowner has a say in the minimum deed terms. One blessing of a very long process is there is plenty of time to ask questions and discover if this is truly something the landowner wants to complete.

Easement applications can be expensive. There are transaction costs such as appraisals, title searches, surveys, etc. These transaction costs may be passed along to the landowner or come out of their easement proceeds if a grant can not be identified to cover the costs.

If you have more questions than when you started, that is expected. You can find more details about the easement process on RTK's Conservation 101 web page. There you can read a sample deed, view a list of transaction costs, and even browse through a basic application. We welcome your questions and invite you to call or email anytime you wish to learn more.



Riley Conservation Easement

## The Riley and Karr Family Conservation Easement

By Erma Riley, RTK Conservation Easement Landowner

The word "conservation" has strong meaning for us. It means taking good care of what we have: family and health, our talents and tools for life, and God's gifts. In this specific case, it means caring for healthy soil, clean water, pure air, and strong plants and grasslands.

The Karr family in Lyon County is now starting its sixth generation in agriculture. Our dad grew up a few miles west of where he and Mom raised a family of six boys and two girls. We were all given the opportunity of a college education and there are now several of us active in agriculture. We were all taught never to be wasteful. So, taking care of nature and learning the best techniques in farming was primary. Dad was always curious about the latest practices and frequently referred to things he learned at a K-State Farmers' Short Course back when he first bought his own land.

Dad bought the east half of our home place just before he and Mom were married in 1934. The west side that Bill and I now own was added around 1946. The four-room rental house there was moved and added to their four-room house to make room for their growing family.

Even though Dad was quite busy with farming, he found time to help with 4-H agriculture projects and to follow everyone's activities in sports and music, but his passion was the Lyon County soil conservation committee. He was a local leader in developing terraces and waterways. At the age of about 90, he started investigating an opportunity to develop a watershed dam for flood water retention. The 30-acre lake in the center of our home place was the last big conservation project he did. Dad died with his boots on, cutting weeds at the age of 96.

Bill and I bought part of the Karr home place and we feel strongly that it should always remain in agriculture. That is why we were glad to work with Ranchland Trust of Kansas to secure that goal. We have several interests in state and national organizations promoting the value of healthy soil, water, plants and air. Therefore, we especially appreciate the three words on my dad, Orren Karr's, commemorative stone.

"Past" – for the practices he promoted, "Present" – for what is currently being done and "Perpetual" – for the continuing promises into the future.



## RTK Applies For Accreditation Renewal

By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) is pleased to announce it is applying for accreditation renewal. The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs.

"Accreditation renewal is more than a seal or stamp of approval. It is an effort - the daily effort to create and maintain best practices for landowners who have chosen to trust an organization to fulfill their conservation vision. For RTK,

accreditation acknowledges this commitment today and in the future," said Lynn Gentine, RTK Executive Director.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how RTK complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards, or to learn more about the accreditation program, visit [landtrustaccreditation.org](http://landtrustaccreditation.org).

You can visit the same website to submit a comment, or email your comment to [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org). Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments on RTK's application will be most useful by December 31, 2021.

