



Celebrating 20 years!

A Decade of Conservation

by Lynn Gentine, Executive Director

In 2009, an unprecedented event began. Lasting over a decade, a collaboration without acknowledgement quietly benefited the Smoky Hills, its communities and the state of Kansas. What did this project do? It protected 13,377 acres of native grassland for the future of the ranching heritage. But, the benefits didn't stop there.

Thirteen ranching families made this outcome possible. As stewards of working landscapes, they recognized the need to ensure grazing lands remained for the next generation. They knew the importance of grass-filtered water to the community watershed. They valued the healthy grasslands created by best-grazing practices and understood the benefits for cattle and the bird and wildlife habitats.

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2023 Events

Dean & Valerie Larson pictured above.

Horizon Wind Energy, now known as EDP Renewables, set this effort in motion. As Kansas experienced emerging wind technology on the working landscapes, EDP Renewables simultaneously and voluntarily, sought to identify and protect priority grasslands.

With the assistance of Kansas State University and The Nature Conservancy, a core area of the Smoky Hills was selected. RTK soon began the effort to work with landowners to provide conservation tools through the agricultural lens.

What happened next was outstanding. Utilizing financial support provided by EDP Renewables, RTK not only applied for NRCS grants, which directly compensated voluntary landowners for extinguishing non-agricultural development rights but also provided the required landowner match and transaction expenses. As a result, 25 areas protected from conversion and subdivision were created. In addition, more than \$6 million went into the local economy.

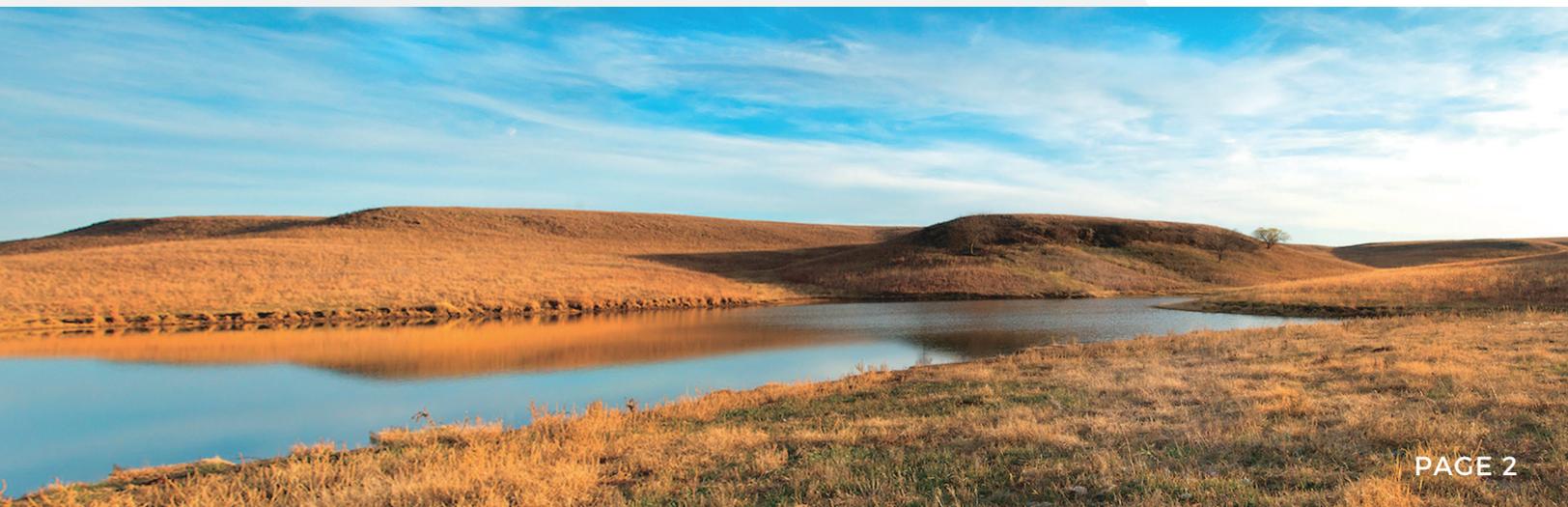
Today, these families own every acre. They can sell the land or pass it down to the next generation. Every day they continue excellent

stewardship and choose to operate the working landscapes just as they did before or with new grazing strategies.

When driving through the southern Smoky Hills you may have seen the result of this enormous undertaking without realizing all these efforts had been put in place. Perhaps now, it will be a new experience.



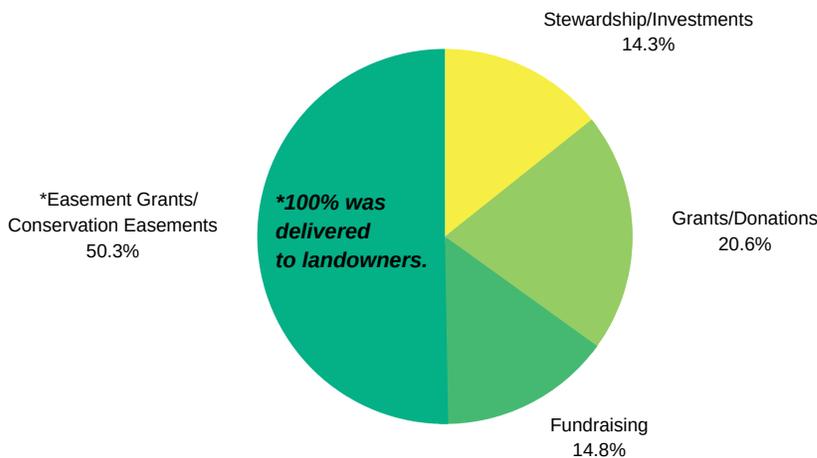
**"The joy of the native prairie should be available tomorrow and in the future. We believe our easements will help to ensure that our little part of the beautiful Smoky Hills will always be a place to experience the native grass, plants, wildlife, and grow good Kansas beef."
- Glenn & Barbara Walker**



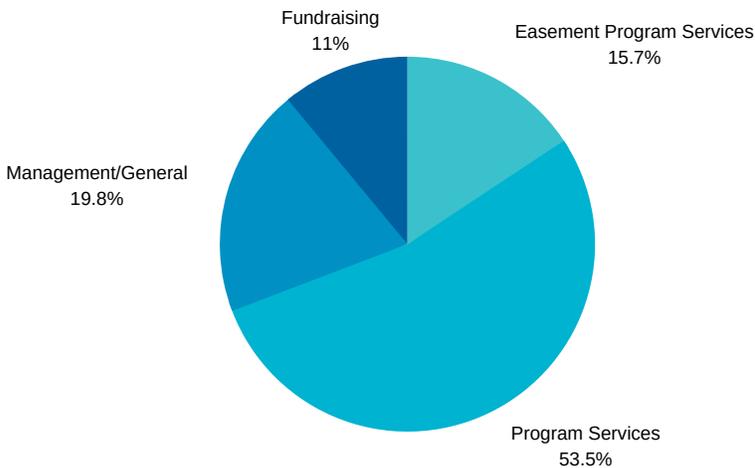
ANNUAL REPORT

2022

INCOME \$454,597



EXPENSE \$427,161



What you don't know...

We have all read them. The financial report with numbers, percentages, expenses, balances, etc. The RTK annual report is not unlike many others that pass you by. But, it tells so much more.

Here is what you don't know about the left half of the income circle (dark green color).

- In 2022, grant revenue delivered by two NRCS grants was 100% awarded to voluntary landowners to facilitate their conservation vision.

- These grants awarded were for Grasslands of Special Significance or GSS. These grants are not easily awarded and are the result of excellent landowner stewardship.

- Each easement was approximately 300 acres. Many, if not most, land trusts will not engage in projects limited to 300 acres. Program expenses usually dictate conservation at a larger scale.

- The landowner did not pay the required grant match or fees which were up to \$56,000. These expenses were paid by the EDP Renewable Conservation Program grant. Likewise, 100% of the award was delivered on behalf or to the landowner.

Nonprofit grants that are delivered to stakeholders are often erroneously interpreted as income or profit for the entity. In reality, the entity facilitated the vision of voluntary landowners with a very small operating budget.

Thank you, to the many donors who make the RTK operating budget and mission possible.

Lynn Gentine, Executive Director

25

conservation easements

17,453

acres conserved

4,540

acres pending

3

conservation easements pending

RTK Conservation Easement efforts to date

New Faces at Ranchland Trust of Kansas

by Samantha Weishaar, Associate Director

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) is pleased to welcome four new board members.

LewJene Schneider grew up near Logan in northwest Kansas on a cattle ranch and dryland farm. She attended Kansas State University and Washburn School of Law. She now resides in Wichita with her husband and works at J.P. Weigand & Sons.

“Some of my fondest memories are playing in buffalo wallows in the pasture in front of our home. My grandfather taught us what they were, which was something I couldn’t wait to tell my town friends.”



LewJene and her husband have been financial supporters of RTK's mission for several years and frequently attend RTK events.

“One of my first jobs was at the Kansas Livestock Association where I worked with Mike Beam. Many years later, he invited us to the Pre-Symphony in the Flint Hills. We were impressed with RTK and believe in their mission,” LewJene said.

Preserving agricultural land and grasslands for the future is important to LewJene. Her mother still resides on the LJ Ranch. LewJene also has a niece and nephews who hope to make their living from the land.

LewJene is taking tennis lessons in her spare time. She also enjoys spending time on the land she owns.

Lindsay Graber Runft and her husband have a farming and ranching operation, Cody Cattle Company, where they focus on their seedstock cow-calf operation. They reside near Scandia in north central Kansas. She is a graduate of Kansas State University, has a master's from Texas Tech University and works for Certified Angus Beef.



“Growing up on a family farm and ranch in south central Kansas, my connection to the land began early. I have an interest in preserving ranching heritage and the continuation of the livestock industry in Kansas,” Lindsay said.

Lindsay and her husband are both from multi-generational farming and ranching families.

“Today, I am proud to still be involved in agriculture and we feel fortunate to be continuing the legacy with our three children,” she said.

The largest focus of their business is the seedstock cow-calf operation, with a hay division that produces hay for contracted sale to other ranchers, feed yards and dairies in the Central Plains.

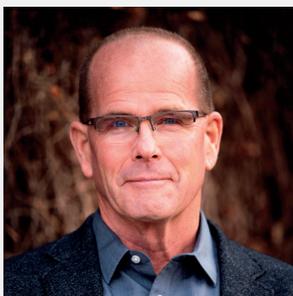
Lindsay enjoys catching up with friends and family, her faith, Kansas City Chiefs, K-State sports, and live music. She is also interested in rural vitality.

Dwane Roth was born and raised in Holcomb, where his family farm consists of dryland and irrigated row crops. He served in the U.S Army and then returned to the farm where he started one of the state's first water technology farms.

"I'm boots on the ground. I directly work with agriculture producers in the Ogallala Aquifer. Together we work on growing more with less, extending and stabilizing the aquifer in the Great Plains and improving soil health."

Dwane is passionate about conservation and was drawn to RTK because the organization has the future generation in mind. He is a fourth generation farmer, and his nephews are the fifth generation to farm.

Through his hard work and dedication to improving land, water, and soil health, he was recognized as the 2021 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award recipient.



"I love to work with people and organizations that have a love for the land," Dwane said.

Even though Dwane is a great educator, he still is looking for ways to learn himself.

Dwane said, "I am always willing to learn from hands-on experience. Growing up, I was always outside. I went from playing with small tractors to operating large agricultural equipment. RTK is involved with agriculture, heritage, conservation, and open spaces, so I'm all in!"

Dwane and his wife reside in Manhattan and have three daughters. He currently works at Syngenta as the strategic sustainability manager. In his spare time he enjoys fishing and K-State sports.

Parry Briggs grew up near Reading where his family has a cow-calf and yearling operation. He now resides in Baileyville with his wife and three children. He is a graduate of Kansas State University and works for Frontier Farm Credit.

"Protecting the grazing and ranch lands of Kansas is near and dear to my heart. Being involved in RTK was an opportunity for me to give back to the industry, interact with other ranchers and protect one of our most prized natural resources," Parry said.

His family is always looking for ways to improve their grazing systems and protect the grass on their operation, which is on the edge of the Flint Hills. The family has made several investments in conservation over the years.



Parry said, "One of the things I appreciate most about RTK is that the people involved are Kansas ranchers who have a vested interest. From my experience, this is somewhat unique. The combination of protecting the grazing lands while also understanding the economic value they bring to ranching operations is something that I really value."

He has been a financial supporter of RTK and believes in the mission.

"I feel it is our true calling as ranchers to take care of the lands we have been entrusted with so the land can take care of not only our generation, but many to come," he says.

Parry enjoys K-State sports and spending time outdoors fishing, hunting, and hiking.

DONOR RECOGNITION

*Thank
You*

Below is a list of individuals, foundations and companies that provided financial gifts to RTK from January 1, 2022 through February 28, 2023. We have made every effort to be accurate with this listing. If there is an error, please accept our apologies and contact Samantha Weishaar at (785) 273-5115 or samantha@kla.org.

Thanks to our many event sponsors, event participants, auction donors and auction buyers in 2022 who already have been recognized.

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continued

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- Alan & Bobbie Jaax
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Stan Van Meter

IN HONOR

- Margaret Carkhuff
in honor of her sister
Carol Duffy McDowell
for her birthday

- Mary Apt
in honor of her sister
Carol Duffy McDowell
for her birthday

If you would like to give a contribution in memory or in honor of someone, please note their name at the time of the donation.



100%
of RTK board and
staff members
gave a financial
contribution in 2022.

Ranchland Trust of Kansas Celebrates 20th Anniversary

by Samantha Weishaar, Associate Director



A N N I V E R S A R Y

*Inspired by ranchers.
Preserving the ranching heritage.*

Ranchland Trust of Kansas celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Established in October 2003, we have worked with 18 families to conserve over 17,000 acres with 24 voluntary conservation agreements.

RTK is the first and only agricultural land trust in Kansas.

Thanks to partner landowners and supporters like you, RTK has ensured Kansas' agricultural lands – critical for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, people, and water – are protected forever.

To mark our 20th anniversary, we will celebrate with you all year long by highlighting important milestones and sharing success stories, including many conservation partnerships, becoming an accredited land trust, hiring our first full-time director, expanding to western Kansas, and completing a 10-year conservation agreement in the Smoky Hills area.

Photo by Greg Kramos



Did You Know?

The U.S. loses 6,000 acres a day to development. In Kansas, it's as much 50 football fields of critical prairies, grasslands and ranchland every day. That's land we all depend on for clean water, our local heritage, and our way of life. Families are asking us for assistance to conserve the lands that are at risk.

You can help. As a community-supported farm and ranchland conservation organization, we depend on people like you.



2022 RTK Photography Contest - Youth category winning photograph taken by Lilly Hinkson.

Easement Essentials Workshop

There's Always One More Thing To Learn

by Lynn Gentine, Executive Director

RTK is delighted to share news of innovation and collaboration. Thanks to the RTK PLJV-ConocoPhillips Capacity Grant and other RTK partners, a most unique workshop will be held on May 18 and 19 in Manhattan.

A piloting event, individuals with related conservation backgrounds will have the opportunity to learn basic project management, program requirements and land stewardship for conservation easement projects. Experienced managers from across the state will share their knowledge, successes and lessons learned from years of experience.

Those formally trained in range management, soil science, wildlife biology, etc. wanting to improve their skills and opportunities should attend. Learn more at ranchlandtrustofkansas.org.



Ranchland Trust of Kansas is a member of Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT). Members of PORT agree to adhere to the following operating principles:

- Pursuit of conservation that supports the long-term protection of agricultural land, but have minimal impact on the landowner's day-to-day management decisions.
- Rejection of conservation efforts that result in a long-term increase in public lands or employ any type of condemnation.
- Recognition of the role of sustainable land uses as a means of maintaining open and productive landscapes.
- Rejection of the acquisition of conservation easements with the intent to transfer to governmental ownership.
- Respect the rights of individual landowners to make decisions regarding public access issues on private lands.
- In principle and except under special circumstances, avoid long-term fee title ownership as a means of land conservation.
- Acceptance of conservation easements on properties which represent a significant positive contribution to agriculture by themselves, as part of a working landscape, or to the surrounding agricultural community.

Spotlight



New Goals, New Opportunities & New Partners

by Lynn Gentine, Executive Director

Photos courtesy of Ben Romans, DU



It's been said, "Challenges are just opportunities." As RTK worked to add mission capacity and protected rangeland in western Kansas, unexpected opportunities soon were discovered. These opportunities included new partnerships and the benefits realized from sharing expertise and resources.

One such new partnership is the collaboration of Ducks Unlimited (DU) and RTK. Introduced through the four-year PLJV-ConocoPhillips Capacity Project Grant, these organizations soon realized they could do much more together.

Routinely communicating on potential conservation projects, offering technical assistance and resources, and advocating for more streamlined programs, DU has become a valuable partner for the RTK mission.

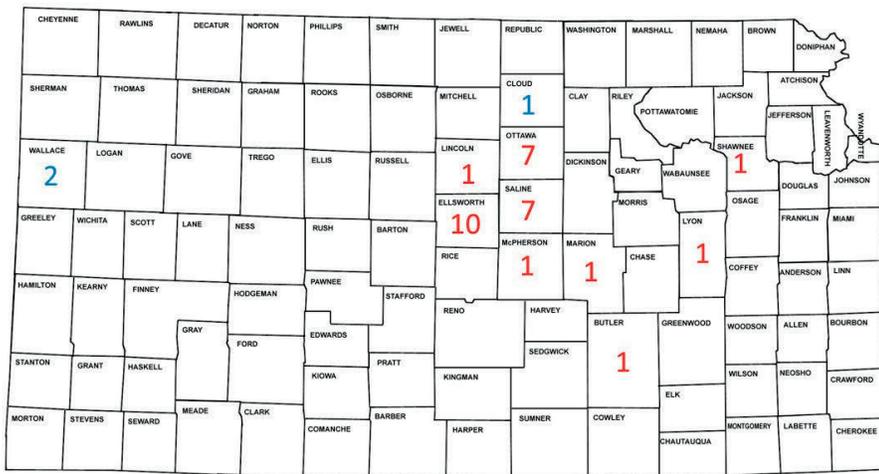
"Ducks Unlimited works with many conservation groups across Kansas," shares Jim Pitman, Eastern Biologist with DU. "Ranchland Trust of Kansas and its strong background in the ranching heritage of Kansas brings opportunity and insight to our projects. We look forward to exploring more collaborations in the future."

Together, RTK and DU will continue to find new goals and new opportunities for protecting Kansas rangelands and the many conservation benefits associated with working landscapes.



NUMBERS & STATISTICS

Numbers on the map below in red represent the number of completed conservation easements in each county, numbers in blue represent the number of pending conservation easements in each county. Ranchland Trust of Kansas has worked with 18 families to conserve over 17,000 acres with 25 voluntary conservation agreements.





6031 SW 37th St.
Topeka, KS 66614

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

OUR MISSION

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

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785-273-5115

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Greg Wingfield
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STAFF

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Associate Director
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We'd Love To See You



This year we'll be hosting a number of events and programs to get out and see the prairie, learn about water conservation and how families are using agricultural land to grow local food.



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

Want to learn more?

Sign up for our e-newsletters on our website,

www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org, follow us on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn, and join the herd. We'll keep you updated.